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THE MAN IN THE BASEMENT

BY

BARON PALLE ROSENKRANTZ

AUTHOR OF

"Royal Love," "The Widow," "The Daughter of the Regiment," etc.

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BOOK I

NO. 48 CRANBOURNE GROVE

THE
MAN IN THE BASEMENT

BOOK I
NO. 48 CRANBOURNE GROVE

CHAPTER I

"It's dirt cheap, sir—dirt cheap. Three and a half guineas a week for the whole house, completely furnished, studio at the top, two reception rooms, large dining-room, and three bedrooms. Kitchen with gas-stove, electric light, not to mention the garden. Dirt cheap it is. It is only a fortunate combination of circumstances that enables me to offer you the house—to offer it to you for three and a half guineas a week."

Mr. Sydney Armstrong gave a smack of the tongue and a twist to his brown leggings.

Mr. Sydney Armstrong's get-up was sporting—a covert coat, tweed knickerbockers, and tan leggings.

But his game at present was house-hunters. That was how he made his living. The business was still young, and the staff consisted of himself and a lady clerk.

His office was in Gloucester Road, South Kensington, close to the District Railway station.

Mr. Sydney Armstrong, however, was now standing in the hall of a neat little house in Cranbourne Grove—it was No. 48—a little detached house in a garden, behind a high wall. A regular country house in the middle of South Kensington, close to the Museum, handy for omnibuses and for the Underground, altogether very convenient.

Mr. Sydney Armstrong was doing a bit of business. He tried to appear as if it did not matter in the least whether it came off or not. But it did matter, for there was five pounds to be made, and five pounds in something to a young house agent. That was why Mr. Sydney Armstrong was vigorously chewing his mustache, while doing his best to look as if he did not care.

The bird was almost caught; it was fluttering already in Mr. Sydney Armstrong's net. It was dirt cheap for such a house. Three months furnished for three and a half guineas a week.

It was a Danish bird, and he was working it out in Danish money. "Three and a half guineas is more than three and a half pounds," he said to himself. "A guinea is an obsolete tradition of former days, and it means a pound and a shilling, goodness knows why."

So that three and a half guineas came to three pounds, thirteen shillings and sixpence, or sixty-five crowns in Danish money.

That was more than Holger Nielsen had thought of paying. But then there was a studio, and it was altogether a charming little house. Besides, Holger Nielsen was not the only person in it. It was arranged between him and Doctor Jens Koldby that they should take a house in London—a proper English house, not a flat in one of the huge new buildings with a hundred tenants apiece, but a regular old-fashioned English house—with a garden. And Madam Sivertsen was to keep house for them for three months. Madam Sivertsen had been fourteen years a stewardess on an Atlantic liner and was perfect in English. There must be a studio, as Dr. Koldby was an artist and was going to paint.

Holger Nielsen also bit his mustache, which was a small pale-brown one, and looked at Mr.

Sydney Armstrong to see whether there was anything to be knocked off.

"Shall we say three pounds ten?" said Holger Nielsen.

"In London we always reckon in guineas," said Mr. Sydney Armstrong. "It's dirt cheap. The house is not mine; it belongs to an officer who has gone to Burma. I have my orders. It ought to be four guineas—I may go to three and a half, but not a halfpenny less."

Mr. Sydney Armstrong took stock of his game. He tried to look superior, but the attempt recoiled on his thin yellow mustache.

"It's too much," said Holger Nielsen.

Mr. Sydney Armstrong shrugged his shoulders. "Let us go, then!" He was not going to give in. If he let the house for three and a half guineas he was to have five pounds; if for less, it only gave him three pounds. So he was firm.

Holger Nielsen was taken with the house.

He hesitated. Mr. Sydney let go his mustache and began to hope again.

"Let me have another look at the house," said Holger Nielsen. They went in.

The entrance was small and narrow; it led to a passage about twelve feet long and four broad, from which a staircase went up; beyond that the passage became narrower, leading to the kitchen in the basement. On either side of the corridor there was a door leading to two rooms, each of which had a window of the full height of the walls, and at the back was a door to the little garden with two oblong grass plots and a few fig trees and laurels. The two rooms on the ground floor were large, richly carpeted, and filled with old inlaid furniture and low, comfortable chairs. Light was the chief thing wanting, and for that reason there was plenty of wall space. From the room on the right as one entered a door led to a passage at the back, and across that to a large and lofty dining-room, which was lighted entirely by a skylight. It was quite a hall, but it was dark. The furniture was of old oak, heavy and dark, and the floor was covered with linoleum. This was new, and Mr. Sydney Armstrong was proud of it.

"It's rather dark here," said Holger Nielsen.

"It always is on the ground floor of a London house," said Mr. Sydney Armstrong, "but look upstairs."

Upstairs it was really bright and nice. There were two bedrooms close to the staircase, looking out on to the garden, on the sunny side, and the sun was obliging enough to assist Mr. Sydney Armstrong; it shone quite powerfully through the pretty little windows, and the sparrows chirruped outside in the trees of the garden. They wanted to help their countryman.

And then the studio. It was bathed in sunlight from a large side window in the roof.

This sunshine finished Holger Nielsen's hesition. He tried to keep to his pounds, but the time-honored English guineas carried the day. The sun had given Mr. Sydney Armstrong his advantage; for the sun is rare in London, especially in South Kensington, with its low position near the foggy river.

"Shall I sign the agreement?" asked Holger Nielsen.

A great sigh of relief took the form of a Yes. The bird was no longer struggling in the net.

Holger Nielsen signed an agreement with Mr. Sydney Armstrong and paid half a crown for the stamp. Nothing more.

"The owner pays all costs," said Mr. Sydney Armstrong; he had won now and could afford to be amiable.

"Who is the owner?" asked Nielsen. He had a foreigner's curiosity to know whose house he lived in.

"Major Johnson," said Mr. Sydney Armstrong. "He's gone to Burma. Just sailed. I have a power of attorney. It's a strange story; a pure piece of luck that you have this charming house. Major Johnson only bought it a week ago. That's a fact; bought it of a friend, who had inherited it from his mother—I forget the name. I never can remember names; it's a great disadvantage to me in my business, but I can't remember names. This Mr. ———, whatever his name was, sold the house to Major Johnson, and the next day the Major had to go abroad. No help for it. He had to go. He was to have been married, his fiancée broke it off, and he had to go. That sort of thing happens in countries that have colonies. You may be glad Denmark has no colonies except Spitzbergen. Well, that's all about it. Major Johnson had to leave. He's gone. His friends say he was ready to jump for joy at getting rid of his mother-in-law that was to be and his former intended. That's quite likely."

Mr. Sydney Armstrong became jocular. It

was the five pounds he had succeeded in landing that had this effect on him.

"But the furniture?" asked Holger Nielsen.

"The Major bought the furniture with the house. What's-his-name, the heir, the former owner, or his sister, had been living here until a week ago. Then he sold the house to the Major, at his club, I believe. The whole thing was settled on the spot, and off he went."

"What became of him?" asked Holger Nielsen.

"I don't know," was the answer. "I don't know him. But he was unmarried."

Holger Nielsen looked about him.

"The furniture looks as if there had been a lady in the house. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," thought Mr. Sydney Armstrong. "It must have been the former owner's sister and her husband. He it was who arranged the studio. He paints, I believe. But, as I said, I don't know anything about the family. Major Johnson is my client. He's good enough; he's one of the Yorkshire Johnsons—but, of course, you don't know them."

Holger Nielsen did not know the Yorkshire Johnsons.

So he accompanied Mr. Sydney Armstrong to the latter's office in Gloucester Road, and the agreement was signed.

It was a first-rate house, and it would come to about thirty-two crowns a week each for twelve weeks, for him and Dr. Koldby.

They could afford that, and Holger Nielsen had the doctor's authority to conclude the affair; in fact, he had undertaken to do so before the first of May. For on that day Dr. Koldby and Madam Sivertsen were to arrive, and they expected to find everything in order.

It was now the 29th of April, so it was high time the business was ended. Nielsen went back to his boarding-house, content, on the whole, with his bargain.

CHAPTER II

HOLGER NIELSEN was, as we have said, a Dane; he had taken a legal degree, was the son of a government official, his age was thirty-two, and he was by way of being a man of science. He had had an appointment in one of the Ministries, but had given it up on account of a certain stiffness of the back which prevented him from cringing to his superiors. Then he had tried the law, but that did not suit him either. Here again it was that tiresome back of his, that was not supple enough before his clients. So he went in for criminology, and horrified all his conservative relations with his radical views. He was an only son, and his mother had had a fortune. Both his parents were now dead. So he lived on his means and for his interests, or rather for his only interest, criminology. It was his ambition to open up new paths; he soon discovered that new paths were not to be opened up, and his ambition disappeared; but his interest remained, and this brought him to London, to study English criminal procedure at close quarters. He was writing a work on "Crime," which might take ten lifetimes, and took all he had. Holger Nielsen was a strong and healthy man, and he did not sit in his chair and read. He avoided books; it was the living material he studied. Not by creeping about in so-called criminal quarters and shuddering at ruffianly types; he had not come to London to turn his coat inside out and make the traditional trip to Whitechapel with two or three coppers in his pocket. He wanted to observe the people of a great town at close quarters and try to learn the conditions of their everyday life as a starting-point from which to arrive at the abnormal conditions.

He wanted to get his bearings in London.

This visit was only to be introductory. He wished to get accustomed to the language, and to follow the ordinary daily events of the street and the police court, so as later on to arrive at what lay behind all this.

Perhaps his plan was not very methodical, but he had a right to allow for accidents.

On May 1st came Dr. Koldby and Madam Sivertsen, and then the daily life at 48 Cranbourne Grove was to begin.

At 7:35 the train arrived from Harwich with the two Danish passengers. They had come by Esbjerg and had stayed on board the boat till the next morning, to avoid arriving in London at night.

Holger Nielsen moved his things from a wretched boarding-house in Brompton Road to his new home, where he did the honors—in sunshine once more—to the new arrivals.

It was a success.

Madam Sivertsen had her cabin in the basement, next door to the kitchen. There was a skylight in the ceiling and it was rather dark, but Madam Sivertsen was easily satisfied. She was accustomed to narrow quarters, though age had made her rather corpulent. She carried her sixty years and her thirteen stone easily enough. Now she had been idle for a fortnight, she remarked, and now she would set to work.

She did so. A London house that has been left to itself even for a week offers a fine field for an active Danish woman who is fond of order and cleanliness.

And Madam Sivertsen was one of that sort.

She went to work.

Dr. Koldby investigated the studio and

grunted with satisfaction. It was as it should be. The Doctor had already unpacked his sketches and his colors, had set up his easel and got his canvases ready. He wanted to make sketches of the river and the docks; that was the object of his journey. He also wished to study Turner at the National Gallery.

Koldby was a marine painter and doctor of medicine.

The latter against his will—his father had forced him into the profession thirty years ago or more. When the old country doctor was obliging enough to give up the ghost at Thisted in Jutland, Hans Koldby threw his stethoscope and instruments into a corner and invested the old man's hard-earned dollars in colors and canvas. The sea attracted him. He sailed in a bark to Mexico, was wrecked on the coast of Florida, grew pineapples there, and gradually came north to New York, painting and wandering about; reached home again, exhibited, got into hot water with the fine art professors, went to Egypt and painted sphinxes and pyramids for a flour merchant, came home with them and had more fights with the professors. Meanwhile he had grown into an old fogy of about sixty. But he kept his back stiff and his spirits young. One Christmas Eve in Rome he met Holger Nielsen, and they took a liking to one another. It developed into a friendship such as two rather bluff men can form; and the friendship lasted.

Dr. Koldby loved sunshine; it warmed his stiff back, as he said. He was a sun-worshiper, with a bias towards Mohammedanism, which he had acquired in Egypt. There he had also learned to detest wine. In many ways he was a good Mussulman. The only fault he found with the doctrines of the Prophet was in polygamy. Dr. Koldby detested women; and although he admitted that his hatred of the weaker sex was unjustified, in so far as women had never done him any harm, he held fast to his aversion. He considered that it had saved him from many disappointments; but he nevertheless had to admit that the fine art professors of Copenhagen were even worse than women. And, like the wives of Mussulmans, there was also a plurality of these idiots.

That was the thorn in the Doctor's flesh, and nothing would move it.

Otherwise he was reasonable and straightforward.

But those confounded professors were his execration, and he could not conceal it. To tell the truth, he never attempted to do so, either.

He was a Radical, and he let other people mind their own business. So they let him alone to mind his, and he never sold his pictures. And he never exhibited either. He would have liked to see himself exposing his work to the gaze of those blockheads!

Such a man was Dr. Koldby.

But the sun was shining into the Cranbourne Grove studio and it warmed Dr. Koldby's back. It showed to advantage some sketches he had made on the Esbjerg boat in a choppy sea near the Dogger Bank, with a number of trawlers.

And he remarked to himself that everything was as it should be.

CHAPTER III

THE first night in the new house Holger Nielsen could not sleep. It was not because he was not tired; he was always tired in London, the long distances tired him, and he hated underground railways. Sitting outside omnibuses was cold, and sitting inside them was not pleasant; cabs were too expensive. Besides he wanted to be in the midst of the life of the streets, to see the stream of people, in which the individual disappeared, gliding past the illuminated shop windows; to see the richly clad, bejeweled crowd winding in and out of the brilliant plate-glass fronts, always buying and increasing their superfluity. Then he would turn the corner into a side street and find himself among poor children, in the rags and dirt of the slums, not a dozen yards from the glittering shops.

These dozen yards from superfluity to sheer want explained a good deal; it formed, as it were, the basis of his system, enabled him to separate the sheep from the goats, and taught him the elements of sociology.

But to get this he had to *walk,* and that made him tired. Still he could not sleep. The noise outside died away about midnight. The tearing motor-cars, the rumbling omnibuses, became fewer and fewer. The shouts of cabmen died away, and the clanking of footsteps on the stone pavement came only now and then. The clock of a neighboring tower struck the hours with a dull sound, but the voices of the night grew faint and finally silent.

It was a quiet night, with no moon—perfectly still; and yet Holger Nielsen seemed to hear something in the darkness, something he could not recognize, could not explain.

It was like a child crying—or a cat whining. Not a loud caterwauling or mewing, but a low whine, pitiable and helpless, that came from far away. He tried to go to sleep and forget it, but the sound grew louder, more miserable. Now he knew that every house in London had at least one cat; but these were superior, well-treated cats, who have rights of citizenship and a certain share of authority. They are under no restraint, and are able to enjoy life, both by day and by night. This cat, if it was a cat, must be a wretched, oppressed cat, mourning in the depths of the house. For it was in the house, it must be in the house.

Holger Nielsen listened. At last he got up, put on some clothes, lit a candle and stole out into the passage. But where the sound came from he could not make out: it arose insidiously from the deep silence, creeping along the paneling of the walls; he could approach it or retire from it, but never locate it.

Now he was in the kitchen.

He stepped lightly so as not to wake his companion; then he was aware of a rustling in Madam Sivertsen's cabin, and saw a gleam of light under her door.

"Madam Sivertsen," he whispered.

"Is that you, Mr. Nielsen?" came her voice. "Thank God!"

"Aren't you asleep?" asked Holger Nielsen.

"No," was the answer; "I can't sleep—there's something moving."

There was something moving, Holger Nielsen could hear it now. It was a scratching, creeping, wriggling sound, and yet it might be nothing after all. But the cat whined—if it was a cat.

"There must be a cat somewhere, Madam Sivertsen," whispered Nielsen.

"*That's* no cat," came the answer in a hushed tone.

"What else can it be?" he asked. "Can't you hear, it's whining. But where is the beast?"

The old lady emerged from her room in a fantastic costume, with voluminous nightcap. She shook her head so that the ribbons danced.

"*That's* no cat," she repeated. "That's something uncanny. I only hope you've not made a mistake about the house."

"What do you mean?" asked Nielsen, with a little smile.

"There's something stirring, Mr. Nielsen," said Madam Sivertsen, with conviction.

"Do you mean spooks?" said Nielsen, with the same smile.

Madam Sivertsen said nothing.

"Surely you don't believe in spooks, Madam Sivertsen?"

The old woman shook her head. "*That's* no cat. There's somebody walks in this house, whoever it may be."

There was something or somebody that walked or crept or crawled—that was true enough. But what was it?

"Are you frightened, Madam Sivertsen?" asked Nielsen.

"Not I; I've a clear conscience, so they'll let me be, whoever they are. But there's something uncanny about it."

Nielsen was determined to find out. He went all over the house, stamped on the floors, knocked on the paneling. The sound went away, but as soon as he had left the corridor it came back again. The clock struck one.

"Now the spooks are going to roost, Madam Sivertsen," he said; "let us do the same."

Madam Sivertsen shook her cap-ribbons and waddled back into her cabin.

Holger Nielsen went to bed, fell into an uneasy doze and dreamed of a gigantic black cat, that sat at the foot of his bed, purring loudly.

That night he slept very badly.

Dr. Koldby on the other hand had slept the sleep of the just, and laughed both at Nielsen and Madam Sivertsen.

He was delighted with the house, and found the studio particularly admirable.

Nielsen devoted the next day to an inspection, in spite of the Doctor's smiles. He found nothing remarkable, and the cat made no sign.

So he put it out of his mind and went for a stroll.

A couple of days passed. Madam Sivertsen did not sleep a wink, and Nielsen heard the cat again.

So they woke the Doctor, and he, too, had to admit that there was a sound of something. He was in favor of the cat theory, rather than that of spooks. But in any case they would make a careful examination of the whole thing by daylight.

That was the resolution of the third night, to be carried out on the fourth day.

CHAPTER IV

"LOOK, Doctor, there's nothing more than this little bit of a cellar, is there? It's a coal-cellar, with a little round iron plate in the hole at the top, reaching out under the gravel in front. Can you see anything more?"

Nielsen and the Doctor were on a voyage of discovery. It was bright daylight, and they were determined to find the cat. The cat must be in the house, it must be in the cellar, but it was not there. It was not whining either. Perhaps it was taking a rest after the exertions of the night.

But anyhow it was not in the coal-cellar, and that was the only cellar there was.

"You were dreaming, my friend," said the Doctor, "unless it was Edgar Allan Poe's story over again—a cat walled up somewhere or other with a corpse. What do you say to that? That would be something in your line, Mr. Criminalist. A walled-up corpse and a cat that cries and whines and calls for justice. You remember the story, don't you? Then it would not be so strange if you and Madam Sivertsen heard spooks at night. For neither of you has seen anything, have you? Let's get out of this coal-cellar and come up into daylight."

So they came up and went round the house again. The wing that contained the dining-room was a piece that had been added and had its own roof. Like the rest of the house it was built of brown brick with a foundation of concrete. To admit air under the floor, grooves were cut in this concrete, covered with an iron grating. Nielsen went round and tested them with a rod, to see if they were level. They were.

Suddenly he stopped. "Doctor," he said, "this leads somewhere. There's a room under the floor; it must be below the dining-room, in the corner nearest the corridor. You'll see, the cat's there."

"Crawl in then," said the Doctor; "make yourself thin and crawl in; for there's no way down from inside."

"The floor's covered with linoleum," said Nielsen.

"What, are you going to tear it up?"

"I'm going to see what there is. I don't intend to have my night's rest disturbed—besides it's cruel to the animal."

"The animal?" asked the Doctor.

"The cat."

"Oh, the cat! Well, how do you imagine it got in? That hole there is scarcely large enough for a mouse."

"By a trap-door under the linoleum, for instance," said Nielsen, with his hand on the door to the corridor.

The Doctor followed him—rather nettled. It was not like Nielsen to be restive; that was usually the Doctor's own part.

The linoleum was removed—there was a trap-door in the floor; it was a cellar, without stairs, but as soon as the light from the skylight fell through the little square hole in the floor there jumped out a long, thin, gray cat; a stiff-legged, disheveled cat, full of fear, but with little vitality; an eel-like, lethargic cat, that limped through the corridor out into the garden and was gone.

"That was the cat," said Nielsen.

"It was," said the Doctor. "How the deuce did it get down there?"

"Let us get a lamp," said Nielsen, "and a ladder; we'll crawl down into this cellar. There must be something down there."

It was quite a small vaulted cellar, with no air except what came in by the channels Nielsen had found. A wine-cellar, they thought. But it was empty. Only in one corner there was a large packing-case with the lid nailed on.

Nielsen wanted to examine the case.

"Look out, it'll explode," said the Doctor. "I'll tell you what, a Russian terrorist has been living here and he's left his stock of dynamite behind in the cellar. It looks as if some lime has been spilled here—lime it is."

"Wait a bit," said Nielsen. "I'll go and get a jimmy."

The Doctor stood with the lamp in his hand, whistling, when Nielsen came back with the jimmy. "You'll see, Criminalist, there's a corpse in that packing-case. A horrible murder has been committed. It's Edgar Allan Poe over again."

Nielsen broke off the lid of the case.

"Bring the lamp here, Doctor," he said rather nervously.

The Doctor came to him with the lamp—still whistling.

Suddenly he broke off.

"It looks like it," he said rather hoarsely.

"There—under the lime—there's a cloth—it's *he*—it's a man! Good Lord, it doesn't do to joke about such things. There's a corpse in this case."

Neither of them said any more.

The Doctor set the lamp on the floor, and they both set to work. Neilsen dug away the heavy white lime with the jimmy and a piece of the torn-off lid. Not a word did they say.

But after a few minutes' work there lay on the damp stone floor the corpse of a full-grown man.

The face was unrecognizable—rendered so designedly by vitriol or some other corroding agent. The corpse was clothed only in a nightshirt, with an old shawl tied round it. The Doctor unwound it and whispered:

"Hold the lamp close—so."

Nielsen did so.

"There's a little oblong wound in the breast," said the Doctor. "Murder! This man has been murdered and stuffed into the case and put down here. The cat slipped in at the same time. Edgar Allan Poe—Nielsen, I was right."

Nielsen said nothing. He knelt, bending over the corpse, while the Doctor examined it: a middle-aged man, medium height, well built—exceedingly well built. No name on the linen, but it was good stuff.

"It's lucky Madam Sivertsen is not here," remarked Koldby; "or she'd have fainted."

This digression recalled Nielsen to everyday life.

"Let us go up again," he said.

The Doctor was in no hurry.

"Let me make a preliminary examination," he said—"after all, I'm a doctor by profession. Murdered by a pointed weapon—made unrecognizable, wrapped in a woman's shawl. Preserved in lime, nailed up in a case—forgotten. If the cat hadn't been there. It's woman's work, this, and it's all as recent as—let me see, how long can a cat live without food?"

"Let us go up," said Nielsen. "And if Madam Sivertsen comes home, don't tell her anything about it—yet. It's a shame to frighten the old lady."

So they went up to the drawing-room. They closed the trap-door and laid the linoleum over it again.

CHAPTER V

The sun was shining gayly outside—the two men indoors were silent. This was a serious business.

Nielsen spoke first.

"I suppose I had better go to the police station and report what has happened. There's been a murder committed recently in this house. It can scarcely be the Major; Mr. Sydney Armstrong told us he had only owned the house four days. It is more likely to be the man who inherited it, whose name Armstrong could not remember. What do you say, Doctor?"

The Doctor was lighting his pipe.

"I want to listen to the criminalist. The affair has now arrived at the point where the doctor has ascertained the death and given his hypothesis as to the cause of death. Now comes the turn of justice. The usual way is to fetch the police. It makes a lot of trouble—but, *enfin*. You talked of the police yourself. All law-abiding citizens do so in the hour of need. But

I must say it surprises me rather to hear you do so. I mean, that you begin by that. But I suppose it is purely instinctive."

"What do you mean?" asked Nielsen.

"Oh," said the Doctor, from the midst of a cloud of smoke, "you know I've taken quite a fancy to your original views of justice—your friendliness for the criminal and hatred of the police. But it seems to be nothing but theory. For now you talk about the police like anyone else."

Nielsen got up nervously. "What do you expect me to talk about, then? *I* can't do anything."

"No, I don't suppose you can," said the Doctor slowly, looking up at Nielsen with a smile. "Although—well, you know, I like people who act according to their principles. I admit that it is foolish of me; you may call it an old-fashioned claim to make, altogether out of date, if you like. But then I have a weakness for soldiers and big drums and kings with crowns on their heads and things of that sort, though in many ways I'm a genuine Radical. And here you are, a modern criminalist of the most advanced type, the criminal's friend to the tips of your fingers, and the first thing you think of is—the police!"

Holger Nielsen shrugged his shoulders. "As you say yourself, a man is not to be cut off from making use of the existing apparatus because he condemns current usage, and because he wants to have it all altered. Radical ideas, radical theories, are one thing: they are the goal to be attained. But existing circumstances are another thing. They must do their work to keep the machine going. They must be respected until the radical ideas have permeated the whole organism of authority. True radicalism consists in following out ideas to their utmost consequences, in spreading them among the people, in upsetting the old ideas, and then in waiting till the new ideas have won their victory in the public mind. Not Revolution, but Evolution."

Dr. Kolby nodded. "All right. That's modern, as I say—I know that very well. I daresay I'm wrong; but all the same I prefer action to go hand in hand with theory. People like you and your friends, who spend your time abusing the law and the police, have no right to call 'Police.' You must get on as best you can with your theories of improvement, your principle of irresponsibility, your determinism, etc.

"Here you find in your cellar a dead man in a barrel of lime. You don't know who he is, his face is unidentifiable, he has no clothes on which could give a clue. He is done with, out of it all. Presumably he has been murdered. Allow me to remark first of all that this affair does not interest me in the least. The fellow is dead; I was looking forward to a little dissecting work, which I could do as a doctor. As far as I'm concerned you may let him stay there, or you may give him up to the police. Of all possible fellow-lodgers a dead man in the cellar, especially when he's packed in lime, is about the least troublesome I can think of. And the cat we have got rid of.

"But you, my friend, take a purely scientific interest in the event. Would it not then be far more amusing to see what you can make of it? Treat it as a sort of indoor sport. As far as I know, there is not the slightest necessity for a citizen to report occurrences of this sort. The man is dead."

"I should like to know about that," interrupted Nielsen.

"Whether he's dead?—you may take my word for that."

"No, but whether people in England are obliged to report the finding of a corpse. In Denmark they are not. I should like to obey the law of the land."

The Doctor laughed dryly. "The law-abiding anarchist again! Damn it, man . . . well, it's the same old question. Do what you like. I will only warn you that we shall have a deuce of a lot of bother. We shall even risk arrest, conviction, and all the rest of it. This fellow's fresh."

"Would that be a reason for your omitting to report this?" asked Nielsen.

"To tell you the truth, it would. I have never professed to be a reformer of society. I'm very comfortable as I am; I know there are many who are quite the reverse, but it consoles me to think that the same thing might happen just as easily to myself. Therefore, frankly and honestly, for the sake of society I shall not move the smallest joint of my little finger. For my own sake it is quite possible that I might move the whole of it. If you ask me, I answer: Pack this person up again, put the case in the corner where you found it, nail down the linoleum above, and let us go on as before. There's sure to be someone who will find him again, and then he'll be a good bit older. It won't concern us; we're leaving anyhow on the 1st of August."

The Doctor was leaning back in his chair and smoking. His fez hung crooked, but he was quite content with everything. Nielsen could see that.

"We run the risk of being suspected when the corpse is discovered," said Nielsen. "We have lived here, we have found it, we said nothing. And I'm certain it will be discovered. We may just as well accept the unpleasantness at once, while we have clear consciences. For it is quite absurd to let one's self in for the least taint of complicity."

The Doctor looked up with his head on one side. "By Jove, Nielsen, how splendid it must be to have such modern ideas. I can still remember your last lecture at the Workman's Club in Copenhagen; it was about 'Guilt and Complicity.' Courageous, honest, absorbing it was; all the conservative papers sneered at you for it. You showed how every human action ought to be treated individually—crime, too. Oh, how well I remember it. The two little radical Miss

Smiths—you know them—wept with emotion. And now, if this corpse is the corpse of a scoundrel, who has bullied his wife, let us say, or ruined the lives of a couple of dozen of his fellow-creatures? Supposing he has got his deserts, as you would say at the Workman's Club? What then? Are you going to let loose what you so tastefully described as the curs of justice on the track of the one who did the deed? . . ."

Nielsen was walking impatiently up and down the room. "You may well say that," he sneered ill-humoredly.

"And you may do it, for all I care," said the Doctor dryly; "as I have already eloquently explained to you. But you interest me as an individual. I find your theories excellent for their purpose. Theories always are. Your practice is just that of the Ministry of Justice, where you will never arrive, on account of your theories. But the whole thing halts, my dear sir; it's lame. Do you understand that?"

"We could take a middle course," said Nielsen.

"Bless your heart, you're a beauty!—take your middle course. That's the way we all trot along, because we are whipped into it. It's the middle course that you're always abusing, and yet you are all for taking it when the time comes. Bless your heart. But of course it's only in theory that your clear point of view holds good."

"Doctor, you're stupid at times," said Nielsen—he was angry now.

"Always, I believe—generally, anyhow. I frankly admit that. But it's your turn to speak. Explain yourself—but keep to the case in point. I hate generalities, and on a limited field I can sometimes follow, in spite of my inborn stupidity. Go on; I am all ears."

Nielsen stood still, leaning against the table, with a thumb in the arm-hole of his waistcoat. That was his favorite posture when he held forth.

The Doctor smoked on with his eyes shut; he heard better like that.

"Let me assume," Nielsen began, "that we do nothing at all. I take it for granted that we have a legal right to leave things as they are; and, as I do not recognize the duality of legal and moral right, the question is solved for me if I find that my legal right covers the whole. It does so. This affair does not concern you or me. We have no idea who the murdered man is, or even whether he has been murdered, by whom, how——"

"Excuse me," said the Doctor; "he was stabbed in the breast with a dagger."

"Very well; then we know how, but we don't know why. We do not belong to this nation, we do not belong to this society, I say—we are free men. I might go on, but it would only bore you. In short, we have no obligation at all to move in the matter—assuming, of course, that——"

"That we are not obliged to by the law of the land," said the Doctor, with a chuckle. "You did not manage that quite so well as your address at the Workman's Club."

Nielsen flung himself into a chair. "You're impossible to-day, Doctor. I'll content myself with telling you that I am convinced we need not report this, that I'm not going to worry myself to find out whether we ought to do so—but that I will clear up the fact itself. You have touched something in me which vibrates when it is touched. You have spoken of the author of the deed. As the matter now stands, I hold his fate in my hands."

"Or hers," interrupted the Doctor; "I said, you know, that it looked like woman's work."

"Let us say hers then. If she had the right to do it, she shall keep that right; but to let her keep that right, we must continue to hold the matter in our own hands."

The Doctor interrupted again. "In yours, you mean—I'm hanged if I'll have anything to do with it. But let me remind you of what you so prudently remarked just now—that this may get you into the devil's own mess. But perhaps you would regard yourself as a martyr of science."

Nielsen was silent for a moment; then he went on: "Doctor, this is a case where I can test my theories. I can put myself in the place of the avenging justice of Society; I can track out the author of this deed; I can judge his case; I can behave towards him exactly as I should wish Society to behave—I'm going to do that."

The Doctor nodded. "You're a good fellow, Nielsen—you look very fine when you talk like that, and perhaps you are right. We'll talk of that another time. But there's one thing you forget—you have not the same apparatus at your service as Society has."

"I forget nothing," said Nielsen—he took the upper hand now. "My chief quarrel with Society is concerned with its abuse of authority in the service of justice. I have no authority, therefore I cannot abuse it. Doctor Koldby, there's *something* in this. I am in the place of avenging Society, I trace out the crime that has been committed here, I come face to face with its author, I clear up the question of the actors and the deed, and then I give judgment. That's all."

"I hope you'll enjoy it," concluded the Doctor, but there was a gleam in the little gray eyes. He liked this.

"Will you join?" asked Nielsen.

"Oh, all right," muttered the Doctor. "Anyhow, I'm a sort of accomplice already. Let me remain as I am. I'll make an examination for you, as well as it can be done without using the knife. It won't be complete, but I've an idea that the whole conduct of the case, with the means at your disposal, will suffer from still more serious deficiencies. So never mind. You shall have your post-mortem. Let us take the opportunity while Madam Sivertsen is out. She must not be told anything of this. For we are well aware that there may be trouble over it."

So they proceeded to the examination of the body.

CHAPTER VI

"Look here, Nielsen," said the Doctor later in the afternoon. "Here is the result of my inquest, as good as any coroner could have done it. It's a queer thing, I've been painting now for something like thirty years and scarcely ever said how d'ye do to my old profession, and yet it turns out that I'm quite a competent medico all the time—even to the dog-Latin, which I've turned into Danish for your benefit."

Nielsen took the paper and read:

"During the examination the corpse lay stretched out on the floor of the cellar where it was found. It should be remarked that it had originally been placed in a packing-case face downwards; during the examination it was lying on its back. The body was in an extended posture, with the arms lying by the sides. Rigor and several livid spots were present, but putrefaction had not yet set in to a visible extent.

"The head had evidently been treated after death with a strong corrosive liquid, of which traces were found on the linen and on the shawl which was wound around the body. All the soft parts of the face were destroyed by this liquid. The hair of the head was partly destroyed in strips on the crown and about the ears, but tufts of brownish hair remained. The hair on the neck was thick; there was much baldness on the crown. The throat bore no marks of strangulation or outward violence.

"In the breast, just over the left nipple, was a punctured wound, about a quarter of an inch in length, with ragged edges, evidently produced by a dagger. As far as could be ascertained, it penetrated to the heart; it appeared to be deep, but the hemorrhage was slight. It appears, however, from the suffusion of blood under the skin that the hemorrhage had not ceased when the corpse was placed in the position mentioned above, and the linen about the wound was also soaked with blood.

"No other traces of violence were to be seen. Death seems to have been rapid, almost instantaneous, and must be attributed to the incised wound in the region of the heart. As to the length of time that has elapsed since death took place, this cannot be ascertained from the examination, but it may be presumed that it took place ten or fourteen days before."

"There—no professor could have made more out of it," said the Doctor, with self-esteem. "If anyone took it into his head to write more, it would be mere priggishness. Possibly the form is not quite correct, but it tells you all there is to be told. And no London doctor could have made more out of it—I'm sure of that. We have exhausted the corpse. Now we can put it back in the case as we found it, and nail it down."

"Let us do so," said Nielsen shortly.

He had made up his mind, and the Doctor said nothing.

They put everything as it was before, even the linoleum, which they replaced over the trap-door. They worked calmly with a good conscience; they knew what they had decided, and their decision was not to be shaken.

The Doctor's way was that when a thing had been discussed it was done with. Nielsen knew this, and the matter had been discussed and was now done with.

When they sat once more in the drawing-room, after finishing their work, and the Doctor had got a light to his pipe, he remarked gayly to Nielsen: "Now, avenger of Society, it's your turn to begin. What was your idea of going to work?"

Nielsen hesitated a little before answering: "I must confess that my ignorance of the customs of the country makes my work rather harder. I must begin with a hypothesis. I agree with you that nothing more is to be found out from the corpse itself. All that we can know is set forth in your paper. We have now a choice of two ways. We can try to establish the identity of the murdered man, or we can direct our inquiries to establishing that of the murderer. The usual way would be to begin with the dead man. The face is unrecognizable, the linen tells us very little—the shawl might tell us something, not a great deal, but something. In our most exceptional position we are not able to make use of these clues; we must not disturb the *status quo;* we must appear as though we had not seen anything. We are there within our rights.

"Therefore I propose that instead of beginning by establishing the identity of the murdered man, we start with that of the murderer. By this means we shall have him, when we have established the identity. That's practical, isn't it?"

"Certainly," was all the Doctor said.

"The Major Johnson mentioned by Mr. Sydney Armstrong is one name; it might serve as a point of departure, and certainly would do so for the police."

The Doctor interrupted him with a dry laugh.

"No, my dear fellow, the police would begin with you and me. And in fact we have this advantage over the police, that we know at least that *we* didn't do it. That saves us a lot of trouble and justifies our conduct. But Major Johnson?"

"Major Johnson," said Nielsen, "brings us to Mr. Sydney Armstrong. That gentleman is such an intolerable chatterbox that we must do all we can to avoid him. Besides, he says himself that he doesn't know who the heir was."

"That seems to me suspicious," put in the Doctor.

Nielsen smiled. "Now you're on the regular police track—suspect everybody, eh? What we two have to do is precisely not to suspect anybody, but to collect all the impersonal facts we can get hold of, until they form a chain which shall lead to a point of departure."

The Doctor nodded. "We ought to have secured the cat."

"But it ran off," Nielsen smiled.

There was a ring at the bell.

Madam Sivertsen returned, laden with parcels. She had been out laying in provisions for a whole voyage, she said. She was a practical person and did not neglect the opportunity of saving something by making large purchases at a time.

"Did you find the cat?" she asked, when she had got rid of her parcels.

The Doctor shook his head.

"That's a pity," said Madam Sivertsen.

And she went into the kitchen.

Nielsen and the Doctor began again where they had left off.

"Doctor! Mr. Nielsen!" they heard her call from the kitchen.

The two men jumped up—had they forgotten something?

In the kitchen they found their housekeeper rather out of breath, pointing to a corner by the range. There lay the cat—long, thin, lethargic, but alive.

The Doctor looked at Nielsen, and Nielsen looked at the Doctor. The cat was peacefully digesting. It had helped itself.

But around its neck it had a little silver chain with a name-plate. Nielsen undid the fastening, and on the plate were engraved two names in written characters, like a firm lady's hand: *Amy's Puss.*

"That's the cat," said Nielsen. "Now we have two documents."

The housekeeper was seriously annoyed with the thief and wanted to drive it out, but the men took its part. "The cat has been longer in the house than we have," said the Doctor. "We must respect Amy's Puss. I would give a good many nights' rest to know who Amy is."

"It must be a lady that has belonged to the cat," said Madam Sivertsen.

"It must," said the Doctor. "Look after the beast; it has been in an awkward place, and I expect Amy would be glad to see her cat again."

Madam Sivertsen grumbled at Amy's cat being received into the family; she did not understand what the two gentlemen wanted with the wretched beast.

Puss, on the other hand, did not seem to mind this in the least; she purred, lapped her milk, and made herself thoroughly at home. And at home, in fact, she was.

CHAPTER VII

"What do you say to this, Mr. Justice?" said Dr. Koldby later in the afternoon of the same memorable day in May, as he walked into the drawing-room waving a little pink note.

Nielsen looked up. "What have you got there?"

"A billet doux, my son, a charming little card in a very decided lady's hand, undated—of course—ladies always neglect those little points of importance; but here it is, very brief and concise: 'If it is all over between us, then so be it, but you will come to regret it.'—You can examine the original text for yourself. The signature is *Amy*—yes, Amy! And it begins *Dear James.*"

Nielsen snatched the note—yes, it was Amy—a threatening letter signed Amy.

"It's a pity Puss can't read," said the Doctor; "otherwise we could learn some more. Now we have four documents. No. 1, the corpse; No. 2, the cat; No. 3, its collar; No. 4, the note. What if it is Amy that has taken revenge?"

Nielsen nodded thoughtfully. “Armstrong told me that Major Johnson’s fiancée broke off the engagement with him, or rather that he was glad to be rid of her. So it’s possible that Amy was the fiancée and——”

“Major Johnson the corpse. No, that’s not very likely, my dear fellow. Major Johnson is a notability, not the kind of person to disappear all of a sudden and leave no trace. Your agent, the indispensable Armstrong, must know something about it. It’s the mystery, my son, that makes the thing difficult. Let’s hope it won’t all end in smoke. You think, then, that Miss Amy has murdered her lover from spite, and that she forgot her cat in the cellar, eh? Well, of course that is possible, but it’s in the highest degree improbable that the lady should bring her cat to the house, isn’t it? And if it is Johnson’s cat, why on earth should it call itself Amy’s cat? It’s a great pity that beast can’t talk. But are you sure to begin with that this note refers to the Johnson affair?”

“In any case it’s a clue,” said Nielsen.

“My dear sir,” interrupted the Doctor, “now *I’m* beginning to get interested. You know, you were going to introduce a new and improved method of criminal justice, and now you begin in the old way to suspect everybody whose name is Amy. It's lucky you have no authority. Otherwise the lady would certainly be in jail by now. Shan't we begin by seeing how much it is that we know about Amy?"

"It isn't much," admitted Nielsen; "but you are right. We know that Amy threw over James. We know that the cat is Amy's. We have heard that Major Johnson had trouble with his fiancée. But whether Amy the fiancée and Amy of the cat are one and the same, we cannot guess."

"We can't, can we?" said the Doctor with a smile. "Shall we go through the case rationally, step by step. Let it be our problem to find out what was the name of Major Johnson's fiancée, and where she and Major Johnson are now."

"Where did you find this note?"

"In the hall; it had got behind the wainscoting. I may tell you, young man, that I'm going round ferreting things out, though that's really your business. Now will you be good enough to go and see Mr. Armstrong and pump him about Major Johnson's love affair."

There was a ring. Madam Sivertsen went to open the door and announced a young lady who wished to speak to the gentleman who had taken the house.

Nielsen rose hastily.

"Now you'll see, Nielsen," said the Doctor. "This is our Amy. Isn't there an old proverb that says the guilty man—or the guilty woman, too, for the matter of that—is drawn by an inexplicable power towards the scene of his crime? You take charge of her; I'll retire to the passage and listen. It is certainly best for you to receive her. You look so pleasant."

Nielsen was rather nervous.

The lady entered. She was young and pretty, with a decidedly fashionable look, dressed in a beautifully fitting tailor-made costume.

Nielsen bowed.

"My name is Miss Derry," said the lady—"Amelia Derry. Pray excuse my troubling you, but this house belonged to a friend of my family, who has left—rather suddenly. There may be some letters addressed to him here. You understand, he is a very intimate friend of ours—of my parents. Would you mind readdressing any letters to the address I will give you?"

Nielsen bowed. "I'll do so with pleasure, Miss

Derry. May I ask the name of the gentleman who has been living here?"

"Major Johnson—Major James Johnson of the 27th Lancers. Well, he has not exactly been living here; he was to have lived here—but it came to nothing. He has gone abroad—but he has given a good many people this address, and it is always annoying if letters come into the wrong people's hands."

"I assure you I shall not open your fiancé's letters," said Nielsen purposely.

The lady blushed. "My fiancé—how do you know?"

Nielsen smiled. "I put two and two together, Miss Derry. On the Continent, you know, we call a dear friend a fiancé; but perhaps I made a mistake—if so, I beg your pardon."

The lady looked rather sharply at him.

"Major Johnson is not my fiancé—he is a relation. He has gone abroad, and my father has promised him to send on his letters. Mr. Sydney Armstrong forgot to tell you that, didn't he?"

"Yes," said Nielsen. "He forgot *that*. Though Mr. Armstrong is generally very eloquent."

Miss Derry again looked sharply at Nielsen.

She had a way of looking sharply at the person she was talking to.

The door creaked and with a little meow the cat glided into the room.

It was the Doctor, working behind the scenes.

The cat stole across the room and rubbed itself insinuatingly against the lady's dress.

Nielson held his breath.

"Is that your cat?" asked the lady.

"No," said Nielsen; "it's Amy's cat."

"Amy's cat?" she asked.

Nielsen thought her voice trembled—he thought, too, that her hand was passed over the cat's neck, as if feeling for something.

Nielsen looked at her fixedly. "Yes," he said, "this cat was in the house when we took possession a few days ago. It had a collar, which I have put away; it was a silver one. On the nameplate was engraved 'Amy's Puss'. We thought the people who lived here before us had forgotten their cat."

Nielsen spoke quite slowly; he was well pleased that the lady was sitting in full daylight, while he was more in shadow. He observed her very narrowly. Meanwhile the cat had jumped on to the lady's lap.

"If only the cat had been a dog," thought Nielsen; "these mouse-eaters are so fond of making friends with everybody."

"It's a nice cat," said the lady in a kindly tone; "a pretty cat, but it is not Major Johnson's. As I told you, the Major did not live here. He had bought the house of a friend, Mr. Throgmorton, an engineer, and his sister, people he had met in India. The thing was settled very quickly."

"And Mr. Throgmorton lived here?"

"I don't think so," said the lady. "I don't think anyone has lived in the house for a long time. Major Johnson furnished it. Well—now I have done what I came about. Then you will promise to send on Major Johnson's letters to me?"

"If you will be so kind as to give me your address—or perhaps your father's——"

She rose hastily. "No—no, here is the address, Miss A. Derry, 117 Clarendon Road, Bayswater."

"And the cat?" asked Nielsen.

"It can stay here," said the lady hurriedly.

The cat stroked itself against her.

The door opened wider and the Doctor

came in. She turned quickly, rather nervously, Nielsen thought.

"I beg your pardon," said the Doctor, with great politeness; "I am this gentleman's friend—we live here together. I was working in the next room and could not help hearing what you were talking about. It did not seem to be secrets, anyhow. You spoke of letters to Major Johnson. Here is a letter addressed to Major Johnson—it is opened, certainly—but not by me. There is no envelope."

The lady turned scarlet; she evidently knew the letter and snatched at it nervously.

The Doctor looked very serious. "I assure you on my honor, Miss De—Derry; I did not open that letter."

She had recovered herself—it was clear that she saw she had given herself away. She now took the letter and read it, and then gave it back to the Doctor. "This letter has nothing to do with Major Johnson—and therefore does not concern me. It must have been dropped by someone else. And now my business here is finished; you must excuse me, gentlemen. I may expect, then, that you will readdress Major Johnson's letters, and I hope you will excuse the trouble. Out of the way, Puss, or I shall tread on you. It looks as if this cat wanted to follow me."

Miss Derry bowed to the gentlemen with a smile and went—the cat followed her, but she shut the door in its face.

Nielsen went with her through the garden—but she did not speak or turn round. She was evidently in a hurry.

When she was gone the two friends held a council of war.

Her name was Amelia—was she Amy? She appeared as Major Johnson's friend—was she his fiancée? She disavowed the cat, she disavowed the letter. Was it she? Was she a murderess? Was the corpse in the cellar Major Johnson? etc., etc.

All these points were discussed very closely.

"Would you have her arrested if you had authority to do so?" asked the Doctor. "She looks suspicious enough in all conscience. And she lies, too. The note was from her. That's what she came for. But then she can't have murdered the addressee. The cat's hers, too, but then it can't belong to the house. Would you have arrested her, Mr. Justice?"

"No," said Nielsen.

There was a postman's knock at the door and a postcard fell into the letter-box.

Nielsen went and got it.

It was from Mr. Armstrong and contained the following words: "I forgot to ask that all letters for Major Johnson might be readdressed to me—and to no one else. I should be glad to know whether any application about the Major's letters has been made from any other quarter. I beg you in any case *not* to comply with any other request than mine. This is important. I shall have the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow at 11:30."

"Would you have her arrested now?" asked the Doctor, screwing up his eyes.

"No," said Nielsen. "But I am convinced that Miss Derry has every reason to be thankful that she found *us* here, instead of a couple of emissaries from Scotland Yard."

The Doctor nodded.

"The more I think over this affair, Nielsen, the more certain I feel that we have taken the right course. The police are a useful institution enough when it's a question of protecting and preserving the living, but when the catastrophe has already happened, as in this case, then I'm inclined to think that it is best for all parties if a couple of intelligent amateurs, with their hearts in the right places and a certain amount of psychological insight, set to work to straighten out the preliminary material for the authorities."

Nielsen walked up and down the room. "Perhaps," said he. "As far as psychological sense goes, I'm not sure that we two have much to boast of. Our documents may be good enough. Especially the corpse downstairs, which is the most genuine of them all; but what about the lady?"

"She was pretty, ladylike—sure of herself, too, she was," replied the Doctor. "But don't you think, Nielsen, she didn't look as if she could have murdered Major Johnson and put him away in lime?"

"Not a bit," agreed Nielsen.

The Doctor clapped him on the shoulder heartily. "My friend, you're caught again on the usual false scent. Because this girl was pretty, well-dressed and ladylike, you don't suspect her, although she evidently lied like a trooper. If it had been some knock-kneed waiter, with a squint and other hereditary signs of degeneration, you'd have had your claws on him quick enough."

Nielsen nodded. It annoyed him, but the Doctor was right.

"We won't think any more about it to-day," said the Doctor; "we'll go to the theater and see how badly they can do Shakespeare in England, and then we'll hear to-morrow what Mr. Armstrong has to say."

To this Nielsen had nothing to object, and for the remainder of the day Amy and her cat were banished from their conversation.

CHAPTER VIII

Mr. Sydney Armstrong came in for a sharp cross-examination when he called next day at the appointed time at 48 Cranbourne Grove. Mr. Armstrong was exceedingly loquacious, and a brief summary which Nielsen made after he had gone will be much clearer than all Mr. Armstrong's discursive verbosity.

Major Johnson was a man nearing forty, of medium height, well built, slightly bald; in short, he might be the man in the packing-case. He had not gone to Burma; that was a story that Armstrong had given as a pretext for getting the house let. The truth was that Major Johnson had regretted his bargain, when he gave up his idea of marrying Miss Amy Derry. He gave up this idea because he was in love with Mrs. Weston, Mr. Throgmorton's sister, who, together with her husband and brother, had been living in the house, and of whom Major Johnson had bought it.

Throgmorton was an Indian friend of the Major's; Mr. Armstrong did not know him; he was a painter; Weston was an invalid—mad, probably; formerly in the Army. Mrs. Weston was very handsome. That was all Mr. Armstrong knew about the family. They had owned the house for a number of years, having inherited it from their mother. If Mr. Armstrong had not told Nielsen all this before, it was because Mr. Throgmorton had asked him not to. Mr. Throgmorton had arranged it all. Mr. Armstrong had only once met Major Johnson; but he believed the Major had left the Army and, in fact, had run away with Mrs. Weston. The postcard of the day before was sent at Throgmorton's request.

With regard to this gentleman, Mr. Armstrong could say that his address was *poste restante,* Hjörring, a town in Denmark, of which Mr. Armstrong had never heard.

All this information was extracted by Nielsen, who played his part of examining barrister uncommonly well. Mr. Armstrong tried to wriggle out, but was held to the point by means of Miss Derry. Nielsen insisted that the whole affair was a scandal which might, if the Derry family chose, place Mr. Armstrong in anything but a favorable light. For it was evident that there was a conspiracy on the part of Throgmorton and his sister. Mr. Derry, the father, was a man of some importance, and it was a dangerous thing to be in collusion with fugitives, as the Cranbourne Grove family plainly were. Mr. Armstrong had to admit that his fees had been considerable, that the part he had played was a shady one, and that the whole affair was calculated to give rise to a notoriety that would be unpleasant for a man who wished to appear as a respectable house agent.

Mr. Armstrong was not a very talented person; he was young and eager to make money. He had availed himself of lies, and was put to shame when they were exposed. Nielsen promised to keep silence; the whole affair was none of his business; but Mr. Armstrong had to promise to keep all letters addressed to the Major until orders arrived from the latter himself. Miss Derry, of course, had just as little claim to the letters as Mr. Throgmorton.

Thus far the friends of justice arrived that day.

"Doctor," said Nielsen, "I'm beginning to think that we should do best to apply to the police."

"Ah," said the Doctor, "you soon get tired."

"It seems to me," Nielsen went on, "that we ought to let justice step in in its official form. I have no doubt that the murdered man is Major Johnson. I am convinced that this Throgmorton and his sister, perhaps the brother-in-law as well, have murdered the Major and are now enjoying the fruits of the crime abroad."

The Doctor smiled.

"You're a lawyer, Nielsen—that's the whole trouble. You are simply unable to avoid looking at things from an official point of view. Yesterday you believed Miss Derry was guilty—though you were inconsistent for a minute or two, because she was good-looking—nevertheless your official consciousness believed it was she. To-day you have listened so long to that gassy person Armstrong that you believe Throgmorton is guilty, and now, out of consideration for Miss Derry—for you may as well admit that it is on her account—you want to hand the matter over to the police. What will be the result? You bring a heap of trouble on the head of Armstrong—which of course he deserves, but which according to agreement you ought to spare him, since the fellow has certainly acted in good faith, otherwise you would not have got all this out of him. As for Miss Derry, you simply ruin her. Think what it means for a girl to get into the clutches of the halfpenny press and have all her private history advertised in big letters at every street-corner. You can't keep the story private, you know, when once it's in the hands of justice.

"And the murderers, supposing it is the Throgmorton party? Well, they will be the only ones who will get any good out of it. The news will be telegraphed all over Europe, and if they haven't clean hands, you may be sure they'll give Hjörring a wide berth.

"Goodness knows, though, what they want at Hjörring! But in the choice of that blessed spot we may see the finger of fate. London and India are beyond our powers, but I should almost think that you and I could make something out of Hjörring. Perhaps you will now have the goodness to admit, my dear Nielsen, that now we have all the more reason to keep this to ourselves!"

Nielsen said nothing.

"Besides, we are by no means sure that it is the Throgmorton party that murdered Johnson —that is, if the murdered man *is* Johnson. Suppose now that it was Miss Derry or one of her family that has taken revenge on the Major—don't forget Amy's cat and the threatening letter; in that case we should give the unfortunate Throgmortons a lot of unpleasantness, quite contrary to your plans of judicial reform.

"Suppose now, finally, that it is Johnson that has murdered Mrs. Weston's husband, which is also a reasonable supposition. . . ."

"Or that it is Mrs. Weston's husband that has murdered Johnson——"

"No, my dear sir, we know too little at present. You have got me into this now, and you have to put it through—you understand, you must clear it up properly. As an examining barrister you're invaluable. What you have to do this evening is to go and see Miss Derry at Clarendon Road and find out whether she was telling lies yesterday."

Again the Doctor's word carried the day, and Nielsen set out for the address Miss Derry had given.

CHAPTER IX

Miss Derry did not live at 117 Clarendon Road, Bayswater. It was a dressmaker that lived there, and she was evidently a good deal flustered when Nielsen rang the bell and inquired for Miss Derry. It is always rather difficult for a woman to play the friend in need when she is taken by surprise. Madame Sorel—that was the dressmaker's name—certainly lacked neither the will nor the ability to lie, but she did not know exactly what her client wanted of her in this situation, and so she was only flustered.

Nielsen took it like the amateur detective he was.

He left his card and said he was ready to call again on receipt of a telegram or letter, whenever Miss Derry might wish.

With that he went away.

But Miss Derry had no such wish. She sent him a card, in which she politely informed him that she had received a communication from Major Johnson, and would now ask Mr. Nielsen and his friend to treat her visit to Cranbourne Grove as if it had not taken place.

"That's a lie," said Nielsen.

The Doctor laughed.

"Now the scale is turned in favor of the Throgmortons."

"No," said Nielsen. "Mr. Derry is a well-known and respected man. If the daughter won't come near us, I shall go and see the father."

"I have nothing to say against that," said the Doctor thoughtfully. "But in that case I should take the cat and its collar with me. We should then find out at any rate whether Amy's cat is Amy's cat. I mean, *this* Amy's, for of course there's nothing to prevent the other lady implicated in the tragedy being also an Amy. That would naturally make things rather more complicated—but only at first. Then if Mr. Derry should ask you for further details, you are in the happy position of not being able to give them. Thus you will save the young lady a lot of unpleasantness."

Nielsen took a cab and put Amy's Puss in a basket. The cat whined a little, but resigned itself to the inevitable.

Mr. Derry's address was easily found; he was a business man and lived on the north side of the Park.

It was three o'clock when Nielsen's cab drew up before a large and handsome house in Westbourne Terrace.

Nielsen asked for Miss Derry.

Miss Derry was not at home.

Then he asked for Mrs. Derry.

She was at home.

Nielsen handed her the cat with a bow.

"Why, it's Amy's cat," she exclaimed in astonishment.

This did not surprise Nielsen.

"Where in the world have you found Amy's cat?" inquired the dignified, elderly lady, after having exchanged affectionate greetings with the animal.

"At 48 Cranbourne Grove, where I am living," said Nielsen straight out.

The lady struck her hands together in astonishment. Had Pussy really run a couple of miles away through Kensington Gardens and found her way into a house in South Kensington?

Nielsen, too, thought it was strange.

"But how in the world did you, a complete stranger, find out that it was Amy's cat?"

Nielsen hesitated.

The good lady obviously knew nothing at all about No. 48 Cranbourne Grove. But if Amy and the Major had really been engaged, if the wedding had been fixed—then she must at least know the Major's name.

Nielsen thought therefore that he might safely mention it.

"Well," he said, "of course, it is rather extraordinary, but the house I am living in belongs to Major James Johnson."

Mrs. Derry turned pale.

But she said nothing.

"Major James Johnson," she repeated after a pause. "You see, I do not know you, Mr.——"

"Nielsen," he said.

"Mr. Nielsen," pursued the old lady; "I can assure you that I know Major Johnson just as little as I do you. We scarcely ever meet now, and you will understand that I cannot speak of family secrets with a stranger. Nor can I ask you to speak to Mr. Derry about this. In fact, I must ask you to go—do you hear? I ask you to go."

The old lady was very uneasy, as though she were afraid that *someone* might come. This someone must obviously be Mr. Derry.

Nielsen rose and bowed.

She added: "I beg to assure you that since Major Johnson had to leave the Army last autumn, neither I nor Mr. Derry have known him, and if Amy's cat has been found in his house, then he must simply have stolen it. It has grieved me to learn that Major Johnson is capable of anything, even of stealing a cat—a young lady's cat. I beg you to excuse me—I am expecting my husband."

Nielsen could not stay without being flagrantly intrusive. So he went.

But the cat stayed where she was.

The Doctor rubbed his hands with delight. "We have disposed of one of our documents. Amy's cat, then, *is* Amy's cat. Now we have to keep an eye on the Derry family, especially on Amy, whose maxim in life appears to be to lie on every possible occasion."

Nielsen nodded. "But have we really got any further, Doctor?"

"No," said the Doctor, "not yet; but we have every reason to return to Miss Amy and her love affair, and to get all the information we can about Major Johnson. At all events, we know that he is capable of anything, even of stealing a young lady's cat."

"Major Johnson interests me a good deal less than Miss Amy Derry," said Nielsen.

"That's your fault, young man," said the Doctor. "You'll see, I'm right. The murdered man was a great donkey, a regular cat-stealer, that is, if the murdered man *is* Major Johnson and not some poor devil that the Major has killed."

"If he is capable of stealing Amy's cat, he may very well have killed a man. The only question is, did he steal the cat?"

Late that afternoon came a messenger boy carrying a basket with—the cat. There was also a letter in a fine, lady's hand—not the same as that of the note the Doctor had found—but signed Amy Derry.

It ran as follows: "The collar belonged to me; I have reasons for wishing it to be believed that it was stolen from me. The cat never belonged to me; I send it back."

Nothing more.

The Doctor scratched his neck. "Now we've got the cat back, Nielsen, and we must give up trying to keep account of Amy's lies. She's a charming girl, this Amy. But we must be kind to her cat, all the same."

CHAPTER X

"NIELSEN," said the Doctor, next morning after breakfast, "now we have arrived at the point where a really rational plan of campaign must be laid. Let us follow the best examples and try to find out what the police would do in our case. We have held our inquest on the body, we have formed suspicions of a certain Amy, and this Amy has *not* cleared herself. We may presume that, after her many lies, great and small, and the disagreement between her declarations and what we have been able to prove, the police would make sure of her person. But now there is this to be remembered, that Miss Amy is under no sort of obligation to speak the truth to us. And we cannot arrest her, either, but we ought to subject her to a very serious and thorough cross-examination. That will be your business; you are an expert at that sort of thing. Cudgel your clever brains a bit and see if you can't produce a master-stroke."

Nielsen smiled.

"I'll begin by showing my superiority, Doctor.

Miss Derry has no obligation at all to make any communication to us, but she is evidently afraid that we may make things unpleasant for her in some way or other; and by working upon this fear of hers we shall get most out of her. That is a regular police trick. But in order to strike we must have weapons, and these weapons we must seek from outside. Mr. Sydney Armstrong is our man. We'll begin with him. Let me tell you at once that, according to my view, Mr. Armstrong knows nothing about the corpse in the cellar. However smirched the conscience of this gentleman may be, he has nothing to do with this affair. So we say nothing to him. We have a sort of hold on him, which I made use of; but as it only consists in setting old Mr. Derry in motion, and we don't know how far that gentleman will allow himself to be set in motion, we shall not be able to use that resource again. We know that the Major's address is *poste restante,* Hjörring; we suppose that to be a lie and that the Major is lying dead in the cellar, and that the syndicate of murderers, Mr. Throgmorton, Mr. Weston, and Mrs. Weston, are staying at Hjörring. All this on the assumption that Miss Derry is innocent. We must know something more. We must know who these people are, regarded separately; we must know their past history, and we must find this out from Armstrong and from Miss Derry—separately. We have now to find out how to make Armstrong open his mouth."

"By an appeal to his better feelings we shan't get very far," said the Doctor doubtfully. "If we were at home, in dear little Copenhagen, we should soon be able to dig up some half-forgotten little piece of rascality and hold that over his head. Here, everything is on a larger scale."

"Stop," said Nielsen, "it always holds good that a man's weak points give clever people a chance of managing him. Eight doors from Mr. Armstrong lives Mr. Davies, another house agent, whose placards jostle Mr. Armstrong's in the windows and areas of all the empty houses. These two men are rivals."

"Excellent," interrupted the Doctor. "You apply to Mr. Davies and explain how you are dissatisfied with Mr. Armstrong; you wave a prospect of business in front of Mr. Davies' nose, and you gently squeeze something out of Mr. Davies by which you can corner Mr. Armstrong. That is excellent. And yet good people profess to be horrified at meanness, when without little tricks of that kind life would be simply impossible. Go ahead!"

Nielsen rubbed his hands. "I shall—and when Mr. Armstrong, forced by my knowledge, has been obliged to tell me all, I shall go, armed with what I have found out, to Miss Derry and get as much out of her as will enable us, if we think fit, to shift the scene of our operations to the more familiar ground of our native country."

"Meanwhile," said the Doctor, "I am going to make a sketch of Turner's immortal 'Storm in the Channel'; I can still remember that ass of a Copenhagen professor who called this superb picture a cold in the head, a rotating sneeze—the beast! Oh, I'd give something to have him and all his colleagues down below in the lime with our Mr. X!"

This was a question which Nielsen, on principle, never discussed with the Doctor. A man has a right to ride his hobby in peace, when he does so within four walls.

Nielsen, therefore, went to see Mr. Davies, who was quite affable. He complained, in gloomy language, of Mr. Armstrong, and Mr. Davies regretted that the unkind fates had sent him to that, to say the least, shady agent. When Nielsen wanted to know more about Mr. Armstrong, the worthy Mr. Davies wriggled like a worm; he was evidently afraid of an action for libel; but to a respectable foreign gentleman, who, besides, was dissatisfied with his rival, he could go so far as to say that Mr. Armstrong's reputation was not of the best.

He had been implicated in an affair of a Building Society which had brought heavy losses on a number of people of slender incomes, an affair which had resulted in an officer being dismissed from the Army—a certain Major Johnson, one of the Yorkshire Johnsons—and which had placed Mr. Armstrong in anything but a favorable light, especially as a particularly notorious person, a certain Weston, was also implicated in it. It was a regular scandal.

Nielsen pressed for more, but the worthy Mr. Davies knew just that, that it was a scandal; he did not know the details of the case.

This annoyed Nielsen, but he parted amicably from his new friend, with his pocket full of addresses he did not want, and the feeling that perhaps he would be able to corner Mr. Armstrong.

Nielsen sat, stern and reserved, in Mr. Armstrong's private office, not unlike Rhadamanthus, who, according to the Greek myth, judged the dead in the world below. He simply flashed with offended justice, with violated respectability.

"Sir," he said, "I came to you with a high opinion of this town, whose reputation for respectability is known all over the world, trusting that here I could safely do business with a man who had his office in a street like this. I admire and honor your country and your city. I had confidence in you as an Englishman. I took the house you recommended to me; it was too dear, but it suited me. My friend and I settled down there quietly, confiding in you, Mr. Armstrong."

Mr. Armstrong wriggled in his chair; he did not know what was coming.

Nielsen went on:

"I am not a nobody, I am a lawyer of standing, and I have something to do here. My occupation brings me in contact with well-known people, I have to give them my address——"

Armstrong interrupted:

"The street is perfectly respectable."

"Let me continue," said Nielsen severely. "I'm not speaking of the street, nor of the house, but of its owners. Major Johnson has been dismissed from the Army on account of a dirty piece of business, hasn't he? Mr. Weston, and presumably Throgmorton, too, are, to say the least of it, notorious—can you deny it? And you yourself, Mr. Armstrong—that affair of the Building Society——"

Armstrong flared up.

"I'm not going to be insulted by a man from the street——"

Nielsen looked sharply at the agent and said in a tone of derision:

"Take it quietly, Mr. Armstrong—the affair is an affair; everybody knows about it. For me it may be a matter of indifference what sort of people they are who own the house, but if I am to be pestered every day on account of these people's crooked dealings, I have a right to complain, and I do complain. To you, first of all. I have duns continually coming to the door; in short, there is every symptom of flimsy credit; and besides this, there is that lady I told you about—an honorable man's daughter, who has claims on the Major. This kind of thing doesn't amuse me—it worries me, Mr. Armstrong, and it excites my suspicion when I find out, in addition, that you have been personally mixed up in a doubtful transaction with these people. You have been telling me lies."

Mr. Armstrong flushed and tried to speak.

Nielsen proceeded, raising his voice.

"You told me lies—you let the house to me, saying it belonged to a Major in the Army. You didn't say a word about this Major having been cashiered for blackguardly behavior. You said you didn't know who had owned the house before him—you, Mr. Armstrong, whose name had been mixed with these men's in a scandalous affair. Do you call that gentlemanly conduct—no! Is it the conduct of an honorable man? I tell you, Mr. Armstrong, I'm not going to put up with such treatment. I insist upon knowing all, you understand me, all—or, as I'm an honest man, I'll go straight to a lawyer and have the whole business sifted to the bottom. I wish to know who it is I have to deal with; I'm not going to run the risk of paying my money and then being turned out of the house because your swindlers have no right to it."

Nielsen spoke in a loud tone, and Mr. Armstrong felt exceedingly uncomfortable, since there were a lot of people in the outer office.

The agent turned and twisted and wriggled, but fortunately for Nielsen there was something in what Mr. Davies had told him. Mr. Armstrong could not venture to ride the high horse, and Nielsen had the upper hand. It is a man's little weaknesses that put him in the power of those stronger and cleverer than himself. Nielsen was anything but stupid. Mr. Armstrong surrendered. What did Nielsen want to know?

"Everything," said Nielsen.

He got some information. It was true that Major Johnson had been implicated in the affair of the Building Society; it was an unfortunate speculation, nothing more, and Mr. Armstrong's escutcheon was unsmirched. There were other reasons for the Major's being cashiered—purely disciplinary reasons. The house belonged to Mr. Throgmorton and his sister, Mrs. Weston, in common; if the agent had mentioned the Major as the owner, it was because the two men, Weston and Throgmorton, were deeply compromised—business misfortunes again—and in particular the circumstance that Mr. Weston drank and the Major made love to his wife, had got the couple a bad name. Mr. Throgmorton had debts, sure enough, but the house was not involved in them.

Nor could Weston's creditors touch the house. Meanwhile these gentlemen had thought it advisable to leave England for a time. They had gone to a seaside place on the west coast of Denmark, for the sake of economy. Whether Major Johnson had gone with them, the agent did not know. Since the building affair he had been a sort of business manager for the Major, who had a fortune; but when Nielsen pressed him closely, he had to admit that the Major's affairs were a good deal involved. Johnson was particularly anxious to keep out of the way of the Derry family; he had spread the report that he had gone to Burma, and there might be some truth in it, as he had given Mr. Throgmorton a power of attorney to receive all sums due to him and his letters. This power of attorney was dated April 30 of the present year.

Nielsen interrupted:

"It comes to this then, that you know all these people personally, and you lied to me on the day you showed me the house."

The agent had to admit this.

'Do you know Miss Derry?" was Nielsen's next question.

"The young lady has been here once or twice in the last few days. According to my instructions, I told her nothing; I had strict orders not to tell her anything at all."

Nielsen made a mental note that Amy kept up her character for lying.

"I am glad, Mr. Armstrong, that you have put me in the position of being able to test all these statements," said Nielsen, in a milder tone. "My friend and I will now consult an influential English acquaintance, as to whether we can continue to trust you. For your own sake, I advise you not reveal a word of this to your former associates in the affair. Your interests will be best served by keeping your mouth shut, and, besides, I don't suppose you would do yourself any good by telling these gentlemen that you have yielded to better impulses and been frank with me. You shall not regret your frankness. Misfortunes may happen to any of us, and I am willing to believe that you have been the victim of misfortune. I shall always take your part. And, as I told you, I am not a nobody from the street. One more question and I have done: When did you last see Major Johnson?"

The agent rummaged among his papers. "On April 26 he was here with Mr. Throgmorton. I have not seen anything of either of them since that day. The power of attorney was sent me by post."

"And Mr. Weston?" asked Nielsen.

"Mr. Weston I have not seen since the middle of April. I did not see much of these gentlemen," added the agent, with a final effort to assert himself. Nielsen had made an impression on him; he politely bowed him out.

Nielsen went straight home, satisfied with the result.

"Doctor," he said, "now we have made a good step in advance. We know that Major Johnson made love to Mrs. Weston, that the Major wanted to disappear from among the living, or that others wanted to make him disappear. This happened since the 26th of April this year. We know now that Messrs. Weston and Throgmorton are two very unsympathetic figures, that the house does not belong to the Major, and that Throgmorton has power to receive the latter's money."

The Doctor nodded. "This would lead us to suppose that the two swindlers, in the interval between the 26th and 29th of April, have murdered the Major and left the country, to settle down, for some unknown reason, in a quiet Danish fishing village. Good, we shall be able to find them there. But the cat, Amy's cat? Suppose Miss Derry is right, and the cat was not hers, but the collar is, and it was not stolen. We then have nothing to connect her with the drama at Cranbourne Grove. Her case looks much better than before. But, then, why does she tell such lies? Let us pass over her lying at first; but why does she tell us now that she knows the Major's address, when, as a matter of fact, she does not know it; and what does she want with him?"

"That I shall have to find out," said Nielsen. "After the excellent results I have obtained from Mr. Armstrong, I am less anxious about how I shall succeed with the young lady. The difficulty lies more in getting access to her. I must say, that, after the information I have got, I want to treat her with every consideration and spare her anything in the shape of domestic unpleasantness."

The Doctor put his head on one side.

"That means that you are now convinced that Amy is guiltless? You leave entirely out of the reckoning the possibility of the Major's having played a double game—which he evidently has done—keeping up his connection with Miss Amy. She may have been driven to desperation; she may, in this very house, have taken jealous revenge upon the faithless one, and the two scoundrels, Weston and Throgmorton, of whom we may now suspect the worst, may have taken advantage of her deed to secure the pecuniary booty for themselves."

Nielsen shook his head.

"Why, then, should they flee the country."

"Simply because suspicion would fall upon them; besides, these two gentlemen would hardly be anxious to have their affairs publicly investigated. I believe we are doing them a tremendous service by keeping all this quiet."

Nielsen got up.

"Do you want to go to the police now?"

"No, by Jove, I don't!" said the Doctor. "But you, my boy, have just got to get hold of Miss Amy as quick as you can and hold the pistol to her head. If the girl has clean hands, she will at once out with what she knows. You need not threaten her with even the slightest unpleasantness. The agent's story furnishes us with a whole arsenal, which you can use with your usual discretion and shrewdness."

"And if she hasn't clean hands, as you say?" suggested Nielsen.

"Then we shall get the solution of the riddle from her. You and I will be saved our trip to Hjörring, and we can let the police continue the case, if we like. If so, we shall stay here, you to follow the criminological development of the case, and I to put on my canvas Turner's immortal 'Storm in the Channel.'"

Thereupon Nielsen went to Clarendon Road. Madame Sorel had received instructions and was unpleasant; he was not received.

However, he left a card to the following effect:

"DEAR MADAM,

"It is no use refusing to see me. I know where Major Johnson is; I am not sure whether this may be of interest to you. You began our acquaintance; you came to me. I should like to arrange this matter with you, not with your father. I shall be here again at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning. "Yours truly,

"HOLGER NIELSEN."

The answer was favorable; it came by telegram the same evening.

CHAPTER XI

Nielsen took the train from Gloucester Road to Notting Hill Gate. It was a bright, fresh morning, everyone looked happy and good-humored; people nodded to each other with a friendly greeting, and London lay positively bathed in the beautiful spring sunshine. But Nielsen could not properly enjoy it. The Underground suited his mood best, with its unnatural electric light and its sooty walls and tunnels. He did not relish the task of forcing himself upon this young woman and gaining her confidence by threats. But for him a case was a *case*. There was also a personal element in it. He did not believe in her *guilt;* to spare her was just what he wanted; she should come out of it without any worry. She was innocent, and she was to help him.

When he again emerged into daylight, walked under the bright green trees of Holland Park Avenue, and looked into the gardens on either side, gay with red and yellow flowers, he felt a sense of freedom and relief. The feeling of spring was upon him, and he had the idea that this feeling must communicate itself to her. He would win her confidence without using threats, since she, the young woman, would grant him, the young man, that ready trust which is the passport of youth.

The house stood behind trees in a broad, handsome row of villas. Nielsen was admitted and found Miss Derry there, tall and elegant, in a new, tight-fitting spring costume, and a little light straw hat trimmed with flowers.

She gave him a courteous but rather cool greeting and asked him to be seated.

He told her the object of his visit, and as he spoke her mouth closed tighter, her look became sharper; he saw the fight would be a hard one, but did not understand why.

At last she spoke, in a firm, clear voice:

" It will not surprise you—a complete stranger—that I neither can nor will give you my confidence. You know—you have committed an intrusion and must admit it—you know that I have been engaged to Major Johnson. You know that it is broken off, that my people wish it to be broken off——"

Nielsen interrupted her.

"I know, too, that you do not treat it quite in that light. You must remember, Miss Derry, that you came to my house and asked me to forward Major Johnson's letters to you. I did not seek you out; I had no idea who you were, until you called. Now I have reasons for wishing to have full information. I am a man in whom you can trust. Fate or accident has brought us together, and now I shall not let you go. I will have full information."

"What right have you?" she asked, rather hoarsely.

"Ordinary human right. We do not, each of us, stand alone on this earth; our paths cross those of our fellow-men, and then our interest is awakened. It is the instinct of self-preservation, a strong, inborn instinct, that makes us, when these paths meet, seek to know what has caused their meeting. I tell you plainly, a fortnight ago—a week ago, the names Derry and Johnson were nothing to me; now they have excited my interest. I have made a study of my fellow-men, it is the occupation of my life, not idle curiosity. And here we are in presence of a *crime.*"

Miss Derry turned pale.

Nielsen continued. “ Here we are in presence of a crime, I say. And I am going to get to the bottom of it. I am not in the habit of idly looking on; it is my nature to take an important part in anything that happens to me. This Major Johnson is the center of a series of actions which are summed up in what we call ‘ a crime.’ It is my right as a human being to assist in protecting society from crime. That being so, I shall sit here and wait for you to speak.”

“ I don’t understand what you mean,” she said in a trembling voice.

“ If I knew all about it, I should not intrude upon you. I took that house, and I was told it belonged to a Major Johnson, who had gone to Burma. That did not concern me, I was to pay this owner’s agent. Then you came and asked me to send this man’s letters to you. I then questioned the agent, and he protested very decidedly against this; he showed me a power of attorney from another person, and he forbade me to comply with your request. We found a letter from you—it was from you, wasn’t it? You told us an untruth. You wanted to be rid of us. That little episode of the cat that was living in the house, and had a collar with your name, made us still more suspicious of you. You tried to get me to act in collusion with you and deceive your parents. Major Johnson wished to disappear, the agent tells me. You say you know where he is. You told untruths before. Now I will tell you what I believe. Major Johnson has fallen into the hands of two impudent criminals, who misuse his name, spend his money —and perhaps have designs on his life."

Miss Derry listened open-mouthed until the end of Nielsen's long speech. Then she sank back, as though in weariness.

Nielsen observed her narrowly. Her face could tell him—nothing new. But she might be thinking of anything—and of what Nielsen wanted to find out.

He continued:

"I only ask you to tell me frankly: Do you know where Major Johnson is? and do you know whether it was of his own free will that he placed himself in the hands of these two men, Weston and Throgmorton? Do you know that he has fallen into the snares of a woman, Mrs. Weston? and why do you want his letters to be sent to you?"

"I decline to answer," she said firmly.

"Very well," said Nielsen, "I can't force you. Perhaps you will regret not having spoken now; it is quite possible that you may find yourself face to face with those who will have the means of making you speak."

She rose and said proudly:

"Your threats do not frighten me. There is nothing for me to be ashamed of in what has passed between him and me. I have acted rightly. I can answer before God and man for what I have done. I am not to be moved by threats."

"That means nothing," thought Nielsen; but he saw that he could not threaten her. Nor would he say anything about the corpse in the cellar. What he had to do was to find out what it was that she could answer for before God and man. He changed his tone.

"Miss Derry," he said, "I do not wish to press you. I am seeking your help in your own interest. I must see Major Johnson—I must speak to him. Not about you; I shall not meddle with your relations to him; I only ask you to tell me, where is he?"

"I do not know," was her brief answer.

"Does that mean that you won't tell me?"

She answered calmly and quite collectedly:

"If I knew, I should not tell *you.* I don't trust you."

Nielsen rose.

"Very well," he said, "I beg you to remember that if anything disagreeable happens, you have yourself to thank. I do not wish to continue this conversation."

"Will you go to my father?" she asked rather hoarsely. "Don't do that—if you do that, I shall go, and my fate will be on your head."

Her cheeks flushed and her bosom rose and fell in agitation. As she stood there he could see that she was a thoroughly British, high-mettled, and courageous girl, who meant what she said. She had a will; he must take care not to bend the bow till it broke.

"I am a gentleman," said Nielsen in a courteous tone. "I have to deal with you, not with your father. You decline to give me any information. I believe you do so because you yourself know nothing. If you knew anything, it would be foolish of you to put me on a false scent. You do not know where the Major is, and you would give all you possess to know it."

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Her face was unmoved, she stood erect as before.

"I promise you, Miss Derry, that as soon as I find out where he is, you shall be the first to learn it. I give you my word of honor on that. If he should be dead, you shall know it. I *will* find out, as I told you before."

"Major Johnson is not dead," she said quietly.

"If he had been, you would have known it?" asked Nielsen carelessly.

She said nothing.

"Answer me one thing, only one: Have you spoken to this man since the 28th of April, this year?"

"Mr. Nielsen," she said in a firm voice, "I see from your whole behavior that you are a police spy—you must excuse my saying so—but that is just what you are. I shall not give him up to the police, whatever wrong he may have done. If you like, you can have me arrested. I don't care."

Nielsen bowed.

"You're mistaken, Miss Derry. I haven't the slightest wish to molest either you or *him*. You think he has left the country with two suspicious characters; I believe he is still in this country—silent, helpless, let us say right out—*murdered.*"

"You are exerting yourself in vain, Mr. Nielsen," she said quietly; "and you're wasting your time."

Nielsen had the same impression himself. "Very well," he said, "let it be understood then. If I find him, I'll write to you, whether it's in China or Peru. Find him I will, dead or alive. And then you'll come."

She smiled sadly.

"In that case you will hardly have any use for me. I do not know what your motives may be, but you must be able to understand that with me you are wasting your time. This is mine—my own—and I don't abandon it to anyone."

Nielsen bowed and took his leave.

CHAPTER XII

"You hardly came out of that so well as you did with Armstrong," said the Doctor, when Nielsen had finished his story. "Amy is too much for you. I'm beginning to think you'll be shipwrecked over this business; you'll go ashore on the female sandbank. Shame on you—a big, strong man! You'll see—she's done it. She has him on her conscience, that's what makes her so sure and so determined to keep her mouth shut."

"I don't believe it," said Nielsen. He sat turning over a time-table. "The Esbjerg boat goes to-morrow; we'll go to Hjörring, Doctor, and see what we can make out of the others first."

"In the meantime she'll be off," said the Doctor teasingly. "She's making fools of us."

"No, she won't," said Nielsen, shutting the time-table with a bang. "If she was going to run away, she'd have gone long ago. I believe in her innocence. She looked honest, I'm sure."

"Even when she was lying," put in the Doctor.

"She lied with conviction; it's womanly delicacy, this. She won't confide in a man. She loves this fellow, whatever he may be, and she will find him, forgive him; in short, she wants him. And he is preserved in lime in the cellar here."

The Doctor muttered: "Unless her cock-sureness is derived from the simple circumstance that she knows him to be alive. You're insisting now that it's the Major who is murdered. How do you know that?"

"I'll tell you, Doctor. It must be he. He has given a power of attorney to a questionable person, enabling this person to receive his letters and draw his money. A man doesn't do a thing like that. What pleasure would it be to him to have these swindlers taking his money? What advantage was he to gain by disappearing? He is not wanted by the police, and he could easily keep out of Miss Amy's way, if he wanted to. On the other hand, it is far more probable that the other two have made use of his death to get possession of his fortune, as far as it goes."

"There may be something in that," said the Doctor, "but why didn't you say that to Miss Derry?"

"For the simple reason, Doctor, that I don't know yet whether it isn't Miss Derry who murdered him. I mean, dealt him the blow, nothing more, for the others have had all the advantage of it. If that is the case, we ought to proceed against her at once, and I don't want to do that. I like the girl, she is brave, active, and determined. If she has stabbed her Major, she had a good reason for it. All we have to do is to move from here and to inform these noble gentlemen that they are discovered and that they will have to deal with the London police. That will take place while we are in Denmark and outside it all."

"We are to beat a retreat, then," said the Doctor sarcastically. "And what is to happen to justice and the vindication of right?"

"That won't be my affair," said Nielsen shortly. "When we're in Denmark I shall find out everything through the three people we shall find there. I shall be able to manage them, and when we have reached the goal, we can talk again over what we are to do. Meanwhile Miss Amy is respited."

"And Madam Sivertsen and the cat?" asked the Doctor.

"They shall stay here. I'll go to that much expense over the business myself, unless you like to go shares with me. We two will leave to-morrow, and the other two shall stay here. Then if we come to a point where we wish to abandon the affair, if, that is, Miss Derry has acted as we think—then we call Madam Sivertsen home and send a message to Miss Derry that the cat is at her disposal."

"And supposing the cat belongs to the other lady? You forget there are two ladies."

Nielsen smiled. "I only know one, Doctor. She has given me work enough. All I have got out of her is that, in any case, she has acted *rightly,* that is to say, without any mean object. I don't think he was much of a fellow, our man in the cellar; he doesn't interest me much now. But one thing is settled, the riddle is to be solved."

The Doctor said nothing.

But they did as Nielsen had proposed. Next evening they left London, and when they stood on the deck of the Esbjerg boat and watched the lights of Harwich disappear in the distance, the Doctor said, rather derisively:

"We didn't make a very long visit."

"Wait a bit," said Nielsen. "We don't know yet whether we mayn't have to come back again. In fact, we don't know anything at all about the whole business."

"Do you think," asked the Doctor, "that at this point the police would have known more than we do? For, if so, we have not distinguished ourselves very notably."

Nielsen shook his head.

"I believe that our friend Mr. Sydney Armstrong would be very much obliged to us if he knew what we have done for him; he would certainly have been sitting cooling his heels in a police-cell before this. And then I think Miss Derry would have fared very badly—perhaps she would be dead. This determined young lady seems to me to be capable of taking even the strongest measures, if things go seriously against her. She would scarcely have confessed her crime. If she is the guilty party, there will have been no witnesses, and nothing will induce her to make her story known. The trio we are now looking for would certainly have made themselves scarce. Yes, Doctor, it is not my habit to boast, but I really think that at present all parties have been best served by our acting as we have done."

"You and I especially," laughed the Doctor. "For we should undoubtedly have been the first to make the acquaintance of an English jail. It may well be that we are not out of the wood yet, if events should bring us back to London. The longer the time that passes, the surer we are to be caught, so long as we are the tenants of the house; and Mr. Sydney Armstrong will be ready enough to put in a good word for us. So at present we must be satisfied and—cautious."

It was summer, the sea was calm and the sky clear. The Doctor sat all day and painted the shining water. Nielsen stood gazing at the little crested waves; his thoughts were far away, but it seemed as though the case faded into insignificance in the vast free space around him. It had no real hold on him, it was too abstract, too much an affair of the intellect, there was too little spontaneous feeling in it.

Nielsen was still a young man, and Amy—the Amy in the case was too impersonal for him.

Their course now lay towards Denmark; in Cranbourne Grove, in the cabin behind the kitchen, sat Madam Sivertsen with Amy's cat. And in the cellar, still and quiet, lay the dead man.

BOOK II

LÖKKEN

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LÖKKEN

CHAPTER I

On the top of a hill, about two miles from the Bay of Sorrow, in a fertile tract of country, lies Börglum Abbey. Broad and white, with red-tiled roof, it looks like a beacon from the sea, and from the land, like an old mansion, one wing of which is the ancient episcopal church of Vendsyssel. In the Middle Ages Börglum Abbey was a Premonstrant establishment and the seat of the bishop to the north of Limfjord. In those days we hear of many feuds and many mighty bishops. Then the decoying beacon used to burn on Rudbjerg cliff, drawing the sailors to land, so that their vessels were caught on the rocks and they themselves met their death in the waves or at the hands of the bishop's men-at-arms. There were tales of secret passages from Börglum to the nuns' convent at Vrislev, of feuds between the lords and bishops and of the last bishop of Börglum—Niels Stygge Rosenkrantz, whose gravestone is still to be seen in the wall of the nave of the Cathedral, and who sums up in himself all that has come down to us of the bishops of Börglum. Fond of women, fond of gold, quarrelsome, lazy, ignorant, malicious, and domineering was this bishop, of whom the chronicle of Skiby relates that he only possessed one virtue: abstinence from wine. He was the last, he and his dean, who never really became bishop; Stygge lay low when the torch of the Reformation was lighted, toying with Elsebeth Gyldenstjerne at Börglum Abbey; and when the peasants overran the monastery Stygge crept into a baking-oven and hid himself.

Then the monastery was burnt and fell into ruins, and after the civil war it fell to the Crown, which gave it in exchange, a hundred years later, to a knight named Peder Reedtz. Since then the abbey has changed hands many times: the church falling into ruin, it came into the possession of wealthy slave-dealers, who whitewashed the choir and set up altars of painted wood with gaudy, parvenus' coats of arms; it came into the hands of enterprising agriculturists, who pulled down the aisles and built cowsheds and barns out of them; but it stood, as it stands now, towering over the hill, with its gleaming white walls and red-tiled roof. Across the hill runs the road from Vraa to Lökken; on the old rampart of the castle stands a disused mill, and from here you have a wide view over land and sea to the hills of Hjörring, across moors and bogs to the great fens, and even, between tufted hills, as far as the town of Aalborg. Tise church stands out on its headland, overlooking the sea; to the west flashes Vennebjerg church and the lighthouse on Rudbjerg cliff; to the north Hirtsholm lighthouse and Raabjerg kiln, close to the extreme point of Jutland.

More than twenty churches may be counted in the broad landscape; heavy granite churches with step-gables, towers, or with flat outlines. And the Cathedral itself is shorn of its tower, which fell with the last of the bishops before the fire of Lutherism.

But away in the Bay of Sorrow lies Lökken, friendly and inviting, with its two little church-spires and a great sea-mark painted red: a little fishing village among the sand-dunes.

Here it was that Holger Nielsen and Dr. Koldby were to solve the mystery of Cranbourne Grove.

Mr. Armstrong had given the address of *poste restante,* Hjörring. The postmaster at Hjörring said, in answer to their inquiries, that an Englishman of the name mentioned had been staying at Lökken since the beginning of May, and so the two seekers of justice turned their steps to Lökken.

Nielsen stopped the carriage on Börglum Hill and got out. He knew and loved the spot, one of the most beautiful in Denmark. The sun was high and there was a stiff breeze; Nielsen drew a long breath and, turning to his companion, said:

"In this clear air it is impossible to conceal anything. Look how the sun shines on the blue water out there. If the land does not help us, we'll call on the sea for aid, the sea there in the west."

"It's better here than in London," said the Doctor. "Clearer, somehow. It makes one gape like a fish on dry land, eh?" And he added: "I think Denmark is best, after all. What do you say to leaving the whole story to take care of itself, calling Madam Sivertsen back and giving up the house to Amy's cat?"

Nielsen turned and came back to the carriage.

"No sentiment, Doctor. We have a duty to perform. Jump in and let's get on."

They descended Börglum Hill.

They made slow progress; the road was heavy and sandy, and the horses heavy and slow. The carriage groaned on its old wheels, and the driver was a West Jute and took his time.

"What's your plan now?" asked the Doctor.

"None," was the answer; "or perhaps a reconnoitering. But look there, Doctor, she'll come to grief!"

The Doctor looked over the front seat of the charabanc and saw just in front of them a lady on a bicycle, who had evidently lost control of her machine. It swerved to the right and then to the left, and suddenly she was planted in the ditch. Two gentlemen, evidently of the same party, came cycling past the carriage, just where the road made a sharp turn at the foot of the hill. They stopped short.

The carriage stopped, too.

The lady was sitting at the edge of the ditch, looking pale, and in some pain; she was holding her left wrist with the other hand.

Nielsen jumped out, and the Doctor also stepped cautiously down from the carriage.

They both approached the lady and her companions.

"Impossible," they heard one of the latter say; "quite impossible."

"English," said the Doctor.

Nielsen raised his hat and asked if he could be of any service. He spoke in English, and saw at once that he was welcome. It was better still when the Doctor revealed himself as a medical man. The lady had sprained her wrist and was *hors de combat;* the bicycle was twisted in the fork and useless. The result was a wet compress, made with a handkerchief dipped in a pool of water, and then the lady was given a seat in the charabanc, where the cycle was also taken across a seat.

That was the introduction, and it was a strange one.

The gentlemen introduced themselves as Mr. Weston and Mr. Throgmorton of London, the lady was Mr. Throgmorton's sister, Mrs. Weston.

Dr. Koldby took this remarkable piece of intelligence very coolly, but Nielsen turned red.

That was, nevertheless, how it was, and not a bit otherwise.

The trio on the road were the people from Cranbourne Grove; only the murdered man was missing. He was not there.

And his name turned out to be Johnson, just as it should!

The charabanc rolled along over the old chaussée by Furreby Beck, past the Mission-house, the church, and the school, into the sandy streets of Lökken and over the clattering boards that covered the gutters up to the market-place, where it stopped in front of the hotel, with one wheel sunk in the black slimy gutter.

Now Nielsen and the Doctor had arrived at their destination, and Mrs. Weston was grateful, though tormented with pain.

The local doctor was sent for—Dr. Koldby was not a man to do any quack work, or to interfere with a colleague.

Mrs. Weston was put to bed.

But Mr. Weston and Mr. Throgmorton declared that it was higher powers that had brought the two friends to Lökken.

Dr. Koldby did not contradict them, though he was in a high degree unorthodox. Nielsen, for his part, was thinking of Mrs. Weston, her delicate, pale, suffering face, and the dull helpless pain.

The two friends stood in their room at the back of the hotel, formerly a tradesman's storehouse.

"I know what you're thinking about, Nielsen," said the Doctor.

Nielsen looked at him.

"She is innocent—and now Miss Derry's shares are going down. If that long, bony Englishman is Mr. Weston, things will look bad for Miss Derry. Nielsen, this is beginning well. Even the most commonplace of novel-writers would have thought twice about arranging a meeting and an accident like the one that has been arranged by the powers above to-day. Let us learn from this to be indulgent to the novelists; life occasionally makes its romances very straight to the point, and, queer enough, just in the right places."

Nielsen shook his head.

"We must beware, Doctor, of all preconceived opinions, you know."

"We take it in turns to tell each other that," said the Doctor. "You especially ought to remember that, when suspected people turn out to be of the female sex and young and lovely. Thank your stars you've got an elderly, disillusioned misogynist with you. But I'll tell you one thing—I only hope this lady's name is not Amy, too, if so I shall protest——"

"Pat," said Nielsen—the two Englishmen were passing the window, which looked on to the yard.

One of them said to the other in English:

"The Doctor says Amy will be all right in a day or two."

The Doctor—in this case Dr. Koldby—said nothing at all.

But both he and Nielsen thought of the cat.

And at last the Doctor said:

"Nielsen, we ought to have packed up the animal and brought it with us to Lökken."

CHAPTER II

The beach at Lökken is broad, white, and flat—of sand, nothing but fine sand; low dunes of drifting sand, stopped by the way and settled among tufts of rough grass. The dunes have not been there long; Lökken skippers remember in their childhood, when they used to sail on their fathers' ships to Norway, that Lökken was the mart of Hjörring; some of the storehouses of that time are still standing; they lay between thatched fishers' cottages, staring out over the bay. And, no doubt, that was how Lökken looked when the English in 1801 hove to out in the bay and fired heavy cannon-balls into the town. The cannon-balls are still there, but the sand-dunes conceal the town. The sea has sent its sand to choke it, and the Mid-Jutland Railway has cut it off from the land of the living.

A hundred fishermen—a few hundred souls in all—that is the town of Lökken in our day.

But the sands are broad and white, and in summer time Lökken is full of visitors. When the bay is smooth and bright and the sun sends its beams down over Rudbjerg cliffs, which rise abruptly from the sea to the north and shine over the long stretch of beach that runs south past Blokhus till it ends in the steep descent of Bovbjerg, then Lökken rivals the shores of the Mediterranean, blue and white, with sand-dunes yellow and green, and red roofs up to the ridge of the hills.

And that was how Lökken was looking now, warm and bathed in sunshine.

Down on the beach, just above high-water mark, stood the heavy, white bathing-machines belonging to the hotel; and Martin and his wife put their backs into it and shoved them right down to the water's edge. The visitors sat dozing in their beach chairs, while the children were playing and digging on the sands. Further out, the bathers, men and women together, joked and laughed in the warm, shallow water, and beyond them the fishermen busied themselves seriously with the smacks and motor-boats, as though the holiday side of life had nothing to do with them. They were seamen returned from long voyages, sailors engaged in daily work at home, men of few words and mostly young, and mechanicians; not long-bearded fisher-folk in leather jackets, such as you see on the walls of picture-galleries, but working men of the present day, voters and social democrats.

Nielsen sat in a beach chair, talking English to Mrs. Weston. She had recovered from the accident, could use her hand again, and the acquaintance was made. Mrs. Weston was handsome, slender, with brilliant black hair and black eyes. Her oval face was rather pale, but her complexion was pure and her skin smooth. She spoke little, but evidently liked having a young man to talk to her, and Nielsen talked well and readily.

The two Englishmen loafed about the beach; they would have liked to go sailing, but it was not the custom at Lökken. Now and then they went out with the fishermen, trolling for mackerel, or they would get on their bicycles and take a run along the beach before the west wind, when it was blowing.

Mrs. Weston did not talk much to them; a strangely irritable look came into her great dark eyes when her husband addressed her, and as for her brother, she seemed to dislike him altogether. It was evidently he who was in command. He made all the arrangements with the hotel proprietor, gave all the orders, and he ordered the other two about in a short and sharp tone. They seemed to obey. He was short and thickset, very unlike his sister, though he, too, was very dark. He was marked with small-pox, and had piercing gray eyes, unpleasant and unfriendly. Everybody in the place got out of his way; the hotel proprietor complained of his exactingness and impolite behavior. Mr. Weston was inoffensive, tall, thin, and tiresome. He seemed to be much taken up with his wife, in spite of the unkind way in which she treated him. They were not like a married couple, and they had separate rooms in the hotel.

Nielsen, on the other hand, seemed to please the young lady. He sat next to her at table, she listened to him readily, and smiled in a rather melancholy way when he talked.

Dr. Koldby sat among the sand-dunes painting, and that disposed of him.

There was much talk about the English people at Lökken. Nobody knew where they came from. They themselves said nothing, and Nielsen found out nothing either. Englishmen have a way of minding their own business.

The landlord of the hotel reported that they had arrived early, before the regular season had opened. They paid punctually and seemed to be well off; they did not get many letters, and they held aloof from other people. The accident that had thrown them together with Nielsen and Koldby was the first thing that had occasioned any sort of connection between the Englishmen and the rest of the visitors. As the earliest arrivals, they had their places at the top of the table, and there they sat and made themselves at home.

The other visitors—mostly tradespeople from the towns of East Jutland—looked upon them with distrust, and continued to do so. Nielsen and Koldby had been registered at the hotel as "English," and the coolness shown towards the English people was transferred to them, according to the traditional usage of Danish seaside hotels.

This suited Nielsen very well. Without having any fixed plan, he attached himself to the young lady; he could see that she liked him. As for confidence, she showed him none and never spoke of herself, nor did Nielsen ask her any questions. He could see, though, that she longed to be back in England, and that the society of her two companions was painful to her. But he could not make out which was the more disagreeable to her: the husband, whom she seemed to despise, or the brother, whom she apparently detested. The brother had power over her, that was clear; and Nielsen connected this in his own way with the adventure of Cranbourne Grove. As for plans, he had none. As things were there was really nothing to be done; he had first to win her friendship, then perhaps her confidence, and so to build up a foundation, from chance words and expressions, for the suspicion which as yet was formless and vague. It was not a very honorable way, but as things stood it was the only method of going to work.

"Mrs. Weston," said Nielsen, "how is it that you came to choose this side of the North Sea? There are lots of English seaside places on the opposite coast, and you don't seem to care about the country or the people over here."

She shook her head.

"One is not always master of one's actions, Mr. Nielsen. We have to spend this summer by the sea for the sake of my nerves; it is cheaper here, and besides—my brother and my husband wish it. That is why I am here."

"You would prefer not to be here?" asked Nielsen.

She looked up with a tired smile.

"I have so few wishes, none at all, really. I am tired, I long for rest. I like to sit still and look out over the sea, that murmurs so pleasantly here. And I like to hear you talk. You talk quietly and pleasantly; only I don't like to hear you ask questions. I never ask questions, and there is so much else to talk about besides ourselves. You can talk about art, about music, about books."

Nielsen shrugged his shoulders. "I prefer talking about men and women, and, as you have noticed, about crime and guilt. That is my hobby, and perhaps it bores you. But, after all, men and women are what we have most interest in hearing about, and in talking to you I should like very much to know who and what you are."

"That is a pleasant form for curiosity, isn't it?" she replied. "I am nothing, I am nobody. But you are right to talk about crime and guilt, as you say; that subject interests me, too, especially when you talk about it—you, whom your friend the painter calls a Utopian. Dr. Koldby told me yesterday that you deny outright that there is such a thing as crime. Perhaps then you don't even believe in wicked people?"

Nielsen shrugged his shoulders.

"That depends on what you understand by wicked people. Everything depends on the construction one puts upon words."

"I was thinking, for instance, of a man who does not shrink from any deed, however bad, if only it will advance his own interests. A man who poisons the lives of others simply for the sake of doing evil. A man for whom evil itself is a joy."

"I deny to begin with that such beings are to be found," said Nielsen. "Wickedness is, as far as I can see, only a misunderstanding of the relation between means and object. The best actions may seem bad if this relation be not considered; but that any man should do evil without an object, I do not believe, and let me remark that the object itself must always be, at the least, an imaginary advantage to the person concerned. So that I believe in mistaken calculations, but not in conscious wickedness."

Nielsen said this with a purpose; he thought he saw what she was aiming at, and he egged her on by contradicting her.

"Then don't you believe in crimes and criminals?" she asked.

"I believe in crimes—as for criminals, my definition is somewhat different from the ordinary one. In fact, by criminals I merely understand individuals who, without having a means of livelihood, sponge upon society by preying upon the other members of society; this they do by actions which are not of the nature of labor, but which constitute an appropriation of benefits without giving any equivalent for them. This is a social evil of which much might be said, but it is rather of an epidemic than of an acute character, and the criminals who appear least dangerous, petty thieves and vagabonds, are really the most dangerous."

She looked up. "But what about murderers?"

"Murderers are people who stand in a doubtful position. It may very well be a crime to kill a man, but it need not be so. In war the greatest manslayer is the greatest hero, and we are brought up to honor the names that are connected with the most brilliant wholesale manslaughter. To kill is an action like all other actions—it may be justified, and it may be unjustified. It all depends on the motives."

She sat drawing figures with her parasol in the sand.

"The Scripture tells us——"

"Mrs. Weston," said Nielsen, "let us leave the Scriptures on one side. It has been too much misused to be applied in our case. My contention is, briefly, that we have no right to deprive another person of life except in the case of its being necessary in order to preserve one's own or that of some other person whose life has a value for us. But because it is thus unlawful to deprive another of his life, it is not necessarily a crime; it only becomes so when the action can be included in the category of parasitical actions that I was talking of just now."

Mrs. Weston looked up with a slight smile.

"Then you mean to say that only vagabonds and poor people who won't work can commit murder as a crime?"

"Yes," said Nielsen. "I should be glad to have that settled as a principle. But I must add at once that the designation crime can also be used for all cases where the deed comes under the head of social transactions of which the normal condition is that he who benefits must give an equivalent. A millionaire can commit a murder of this criminal kind. Well, perhaps you don't understand that. I mean, simply, that it is the motive that determines this, and the motive must be of a social kind to make it a crime."

"Otherwise it is permitted to kill," she said. "That is what you mean, isn't it?"

"I didn't say that. You must remember, we are talking of criminals, of wicked people. I say that there are criminals, there are crimes, there are, in fact, actions which must be judged and explained by their motives. If we could find a new name for them, it would be the first step. We must judge the motives to judge the actions, and at present the opposite is what is done. But of course I can't explain all this to you in a conversation on these sunny sands. I only wanted to show you the line to follow. For you seem to take an interest in murder and murderers."

"I?" she said in alarm. "No, to tell you the truth, it is only newspapers and detective stories that have set me thinking of murders. Thank God, most of us pass our lives without coming personally in contact with anything of that sort. But it interests me. You know, it interests everybody."

Nielsen had risen.

"Of course, it interests everybody. I personally have come in contact with a very remarkable murder case—well, I won't tell you about it today, but some other time. I can assure you it is interesting, and it will illustrate my fundamental view—which, of course, is best illustrated by examples."

Mrs. Weston smiled.

"You are right there. For with all respect for your eloquence your theories about murder and murderers are not altogether clear."

"I hope to make them so," said Nielsen. "It is my hobby, and I shall do my best to show *you* what I mean."

"Why me?" she asked.

"Because you interest me deeply, Mrs. Weston."

"It's just lunch time," she said, getting up.

They walked together through the sand-dunes, where a lane had been dug between banks and fenced.

On the beach, by this lane, ran the town drain, stinking and stagnant in the heat of the sun.

"I suppose that is Danish," said Mrs. Weston; "to poison the beautiful fresh air with a swamp like that."

“It is poverty,” said Nielsen. “The town cannot afford to build a proper drain, so the gutters of Lökken have to smell and the beach must be poisoned by this swamp.”

“In England it would not be allowed,” she said.

“In England there is lots of money. But Denmark, as the poet sings, is a poor little land, and Lökken, with all its beauty, is a poor little town. But you, Mrs. Weston, who are quite right in praising the undoubted advantages of your own country—why are you living out of that country, where alone you seem to feel at home?”

Mrs. Weston stopped and looked at him seriously.

“Mr. Nielsen,” she said. “You have been a good companion to me during the last tedious days. I feel as if it refreshed me to talk to you. But you must do me a favor—ask no questions. I am here against my will, but even if you were the dearest friend of my childhood, I could not tell you why I am here. Now that you know it is a secret, you won’t ask any more.”

“Of course not,” said Nielsen.

But now he had found out that Mrs. Weston was there against her will; that there were men around her who did evil for its own sake, and that she was interested in murders.

He could have told himself that in advance—but still he thought it was something.

"Not much, though," thought Dr. Koldby—rightly. After lunch he and Nielsen took a turn on the sands towards Nybæk, which appears, flat and waterless in summer, among the sand-dunes about a mile south of Lökken.

The Doctor chaffed Nielsen about the English lady.

"The whole hotel is talking about you two," he said. "At first I left you alone. I thought of course that you were out after discoveries, in your character of avenger of Society. But now the fat cloth merchant from Randers and his old woman have dinned my ears so full of spiteful things about you that I begin to be suspicious. Nielsen, my boy, you begin as an original avenger of justice in tragedy style, and you will end as a ladykiller in operetta style, with love and all the rest of it, just like the singer who carries his beloved in his arms out into the water every morning, to the scandal of the whole congregation at bathing time."

"You're jocular, Doctor," said Nielsen. "And you are so far right, in that the murder itself, as we stand here far from the scene of it and among the living people concerned in it, disappears into the background, becomes something quite abstract, something psychologically different from what it was at Cranbourne Grove."

"In which form do you prefer it?" asked the Doctor.

"In this form, certainly," was the answer.

"But what will you do?"

Nielsen stretched and turned to the sea, which lay before him, glancing in the sun. "I shall do just what the situation demands, Doctor. Let everything come about of itself, and observe—observe until I can see clearly."

"And then?"

Nielsen turned round and laid his hand on the Doctor's shoulder.

"Then perhaps I shall shut my eyes and not see any more."

"That is to say, you will give Mr. Armstrong notice and send for Madam Sivertsen without the cat, as I proposed last Thursday. Very well, Nielsen, you know that whatever you do will be well done, as long as you are honest in your motives and don't sail under false colors. But here you must be good enough to remember that whereas, so long as we were dealing with Miss Derry, there was always one way out which I generally take into consideration when it's a question of unattached young men and good-looking girls—namely the chance that the masculine may take the feminine and run off with it. *Here,* on the other hand, we find the feminine party already provided with a lawful spouse, which makes the case a good deal more complicated. What?"

"I haven't the slightest intention of explaining myself," said Nielsen; "not before we know a great deal more than we do now."

"There may be something in that," said the Doctor. "Especially as we know absolutely nothing at present."

"Quite so, my dear Doctor; then we are agreed."

"We always are," said the Doctor.

And he added:

"Always when your ideas are reasonable."

"So this is the state of affairs," said the Doctor: "The family assembled here, with which Providence has brought us in contact in its unfathomable way—leading in this case across

Börglum Hill—is our trio from Cranbourne Grove. Mr. Weston is married to Mrs. Weston. He is tall, gaunt, and looks a fool, but we can scarcely call him a lunatic. At the worst, he's of rather weak intellect. As to her, I reserve my opinion until she is quite well again. But the brother, Mr. Throgmorton, is just cut out to be an object of suspicion. None of the outward signs are wanting. Scowling eyes, eyebrows that meet, ears flat against the head. In short, he has such a suspicious look that I begin by dismissing the idea of suspecting him.

"The party has been here four weeks. So they arrived here just when they should, and just as the London season began. '*Poste restante,* Hjörring,' simply meant that they knew this part, but had not decided on Lönstrup or Lökken or Hirtshals. They have been to Lönstrup before—that is, Mrs. Weston has been there—as Miss Throgmorton, with an elder lady.

"They chose Lökken, where none of them had been before. Note that as a suspicious circumstance, though it really doesn't matter a straw, and then tell me what you are thinking about."

"I'm thinking about Miss Amy Derry," said Nielsen.

"Oh, you're making comparisons. Which of the two comes out best?"

"This one—decidedly," said Nielsen; "she's lovely."

"The very word I used the first time we saw her. Poor Miss Derry! You'll see now, she'll turn out to be the murderess, and these people here had nothing to do with the business, in spite of Mr. Throgmorton's decidedly criminal appearance."

CHAPTER III

The days passed, the sea remained calm and friendly, the sun continued to shed its warmth over the scene. Visitors went and visitors came, Dr. Koldby painted and Nielsen idled on the sands, generally with Mrs. Weston. The two Englishmen were rather annoyed at this, but they sought distraction in sport. The other visitors looked askance. Nielsen made no progress.

And the Doctor chaffed him.

Miss Derry did not write, and Madam Sivertsen's reports were brief. She could not understand why the two gentlemen kept on the expensive house in London, but they paid, and she got along. The cat was getting fat and sleek. Perhaps it was for the cat's sake they kept the house? She liked the animal; they had become good friends.

The Doctor, too, thought it was getting a rather expensive amusement, and Nielsen admitted that it was an unproductive investment; but, good heavens, this was a *case,* and before three months were past they would have it straightened out. Anyhow, they had the house, and they could always use it.

But the worst of it all was, that they made no progress. They seemed to have stuck. So the Doctor decided to lend a hand and make up to the Englishmen, but it did not come to much. He went in for sailing, and hired a smack from an old fisherman, Silius Hansen by name. The Englishmen went out with him once, and then they found a fisherman at the north end of the town, hired his smack, and went out alone.

Late one evening the Doctor unburdened his heart to Nielsen, over their last cigar.

"Look here, Nielsen," he said, "we have now reached the point where a general forces a decisive action. I don't think you have yet succeeded in warming Mrs. Weston up to boiling-point. Make haste and do so. She is sick to death of her husband and she is gone on you, I can see that in her. So far, so good; make sure of your ally, and then go forward. I assume, of course, that she is white as snow."

Nielsen shook his head.

"I'd rather not go to work in that way. No, let us make our attack where the fortress seems strongest, that's the heroic way."

"Oho!" laughed the Doctor. "You're a hero."

"Yes, or a knight," said Nielsen, laughing. "These two gentlemen are unpleasant, but we'll make them lay down their arms, I'm hanged if we won't. I'll entice them a long way out to sea, in Bolle Jens' *Betty,* after lobsters on the great banks, and then I'll open fire on them where they can't get away. They won't be able to break off the discussion out there. A twelve hours' working day at sea is a good thing. What do you think?"

"There's something in that," said the Doctor, "but you ought to take them one at a time. Let me hang on to Throgmorton while you go out in Bolle Jens' *Betty,* taking only Weston with you. I don't suppose you are so quixotically chivalrous as not to admit the advisability of attacking the weakest of the men first?"

"No, in dealing with men the tactics are different," said Nielsen. "You are right. You take charge of Throgmorton, while I sail out with Weston and do the needful."

"What? Tell him all?"

"Yes."

"H'm! Is that wise? Then we shall have

to call in the police to keep the fellows in check."

"That wasn't my intention," said Nielsen; "but now I had better give you my whole plan."

"Let's hear it," said the Doctor.

"Well, when we're out at sea, I shall say to Mr. Weston that if I have approached his wife and tried to entertain her, he mustn't think for a moment that I had any idea of interfering with his rights. You see, the fellow is fearfully jealous, isn't he?"

"Somewhat," assented the Doctor.

"Good, again. Then—I had no intention of slighting him, but his wife interested me. A friend of mine, whom he probably knows, as she undoubtedly knows him, a Miss Derry——"

"Ah——" interrupted the Doctor.

"Yes, now I play out Miss Derry. Miss Derry has told me that her fiancé, Major Johnson, had lost his heart to Mrs. Weston and broken his engagement with her. That of course will only excite him a little——"

"Supposing it to be true," put in the Doctor.

"Whether it is true or not, I will go a step further. I will say that Miss Derry will not give up her Major, and that I have come to Lökken to find him. That of course will have a disagreeable effect on Mr. Weston."

"Do you think so?" said the Doctor—he had a wicked look in the corner of his eye; it tickled him to see Nielsen going off on a wrong scent—and this scent was wrong.

"May I be allowed an observation?" he went on.

"Ten," said Nielsen.

"We start with the assumption that the Weston syndicate have murdered Major Johnson. Your companion will therefore be perfectly well aware that the Major you and Miss Derry are looking for is lying safely in the cellar at Cranbourne Grove, and so is easy to find. Outwardly he will pretend not to understand a word of it, and inwardly he will laugh at you."

A superior smile came over Nielsen's face.

"Thank Heaven I'm not such an idiot as you take me for, my dear Doctor," he said. "Be quiet now and listen, and then believe, O thou of little faith. It is quite possible to underestimate the intelligence of an ordinary person."

"Go ahead," said the Doctor, pouring out a big glass of whisky for Nielsen. The Doctor himself drank soda water.

Nielsen continued.

"We are out in the boat on the big bank, then, and, as you so pertinently remarked, the Englishman sits inwardly grinning at me. Then I say: 'Mr. Weston—it's no use your trying to play with me. Miss Derry is in earnest. We have taken your house, No. 48 Cranbourne Grove, you understand, and——' "

The Doctor could not resist an interruption. "Down in the cellar we found——"

"May I call you an idiot without making you angry, my dear Doctor?"

"You may call me a fool, if you like; for I can't be more stupid than you are."

"Then I'll say idiot. Do you really think I will tell Weston that? Good Lord! hasn't our long acquaintanceship given you a higher opinion of me? I'm sorry for you, for I'm hanged if the fault is on my side."

"Nielsen," said the Doctor, "it's only a step from too much cleverness to idiocy, and now, upon my word, you're too clever."

"Can you be quiet, Doctor, for a couple of minutes?"

The Doctor was quiet.

"I shall say to my Englishman, out there on the blue water, that if he won't make a clean breast of it, I shall go back to London, and if I have to tear up the floor in every single room at 48 Cranbourne Grove, I'll do it, for I *will* have the Major, dead or alive. Now what do you say?"

The Doctor bowed deeply—and drank in silence.

"Nielsen," said he, "that's what you have to do. It's good."

They were silent for a few moments—Nielsen enjoying his triumph, the Doctor with a finger on his nose.

He was not going to be cut out by Nielsen.

"What next?" he asked.

Nielsen smiled.

"It is very difficult to foresee what effect a dose of that description will have on the victim. Let us try to form a hypothesis."

"Stop a bit," said the Doctor, with a mischievous laugh. "One should never allow one's self to be put down. You said that so deuced smartly that I hadn't an answer ready. Now I have. You talk about hypotheses. But you're over head and ears in hypotheses already. You start with the assumption that you can use Miss Derry as a stalking-horse. We know what Miss Derry has said, but we know, too, that this lady, to say the least of it, is a little reckless in her dealings with the truth. So that if Miss Derry herself has the Major's death on her conscience, if she killed him from jealousy and hid him away in lime,—in short, if she is the murderess, then Mr. Weston will be right in looking down upon you from the whole moral height of a thwart of the *Betty,* and you will be transformed from an accuser into an accomplice."

"You forget that on that assumption Mr. Weston would not know what there was lying in the cellar at Cranbourne Grove, and in that case he may look upon me as an idiot, if he likes. Then our mission here would be at an end."

The Doctor thought over that.

"There's something in it. Well, in that case we fall back on Miss Derry, and ought to be able to get valuable information from the Englishmen here. I'll admit that. But now supposing Mr. Weston is one of the murderers, then that would be——"

"The hypothesis," said Nielsen. "Exactly. Mr. Weston's first thought will be to take refuge in Throgmorton. But there will be the whole length of the bay between them. In parenthesis, I take off my hat to your plan of isolating them, it is excellent. So then, Mr. Throgmorton will not be on hand, we are miles from shore, and I stick to my game. Mr. Weston will get angry and say a whole lot of things which we can't guess, but which I shall carefully make note of. And in the meantime you will be saying something of the same kind to Mr. Throgmorton—but not that about tearing up the floor, that's too good to be said twice over. On our return the two gentlemen will make plans for clearing out——"

"Probably," said the Doctor. "We shall have spoiled their summer holiday."

"Yes, I think so. They won't go without her. We get to know what she knows, or rather, how much she knows, and according to that we make our plans. No doubt she knows nothing, or at any rate not much. She won't let herself be dragged off by these two criminals; we shall isolate them, and—well, in fact, we shall hold our inquiry and then decide!"

"It sounds all right," said the Doctor; "but it will hardly come off in practice."

"That, my dear Doctor, is because it rests upon hypotheses. Now, I'm tired of waiting. Let it turn out as it may; the time has come for us to act."

"Yes, you're right there," said the Doctor, finishing his soda water.

The council was adjourned.

CHAPTER IV

Bolle Jens was a carpenter and fisherman, a tall, lanky fellow with a regular seaman's face and a little smile at the corner of his mouth; dry and witty, and a glutton for work. "He knows all about fishing, does Bolle Jens," they said at Lökken, and it was true. Bolle Jens was not afraid of any kind of weather; his sea-boat *Betty* was the smartest sailer in the place; he caught more haddock than anyone else in winter, and in summer his lobster-pots on the Great Bank were full.

Bolle Jens stood on the beach, getting the *Betty* ready. The *Betty* was built in Norway, a great, broad-bowed sea-boat, painted gray below and white above, almost the only sailing boat now, since motors had carried all before them at Lökken. Bolle Jens still stuck to sails. He wanted to pay cash for his motor, if he got one, and there was still a whole summer's fishing to be done before he had the money.

But it would come.

"Petersen," said Nielsen—Petersen was another name of Bolle Jens—" will you take me and another man out to-morrow, if it's good weather?"

" Right you are," said Bolle Jens. " Is it the painter?"

" No, it's one of the Englishmen."

" All right," said Bolle Jens. " We'll sail at two o'clock, just at daybreak. The weather's good enough, and the glass is steady. You come at two."

That settled one side of the business.

After lunch Nielsen proposed the trip to Mr. Weston.

The Englishman hesitated and called in his companion.

Throgmorton did not like Nielsen; he evidently disliked strangers altogether. He was also in a bad temper; probably on account of a dispute with his sister. That happened rather frequently, people said; and there were not wanting some who declared that Nielson was the cause of these disputes.

Throgmorton was disagreeable.

" Sir," he said, " accident has thrown us together. You rendered my sister a service which anybody else might have rendered her. You make that a pretext for forcing your society upon her. You have been the cause of gossip about her. You have endangered her reputation. Yes, you have. I don't care a damn about you, but if it's your intention to thrust yourself on my brother-in-law as well—perhaps to make good what you have done wrong in the other direction—then let me tell you—as my brother-in-law is a very civil-spoken man—that we only ask you to mind your own business and leave us in peace. I am sick of this. You can go to the devil."

This was not very polite, and Nielsen flushed to the roots of his hair. But he thought of his plans and answered courteously.

"I'm sure, Mr. Throgmorton, you can't say that I have forced my society on anybody. I have talked to Mrs. Weston, for whom I have the greatest respect, because I thought I could see that she liked me to do so. I may have been mistaken. I don't wish to be insulted by you and therefore I conclude this conversation; but I want to resume it at another time, and in earnest. It goes without saying that I shall speak to Mrs. Weston about it, and if anyone in the place has made any insinuations, perhaps I may ask for his name. In an affair of that kind I am not to be trifled with."

Throgmorton snarled.

"I only want you to leave *us* in peace. My sister is free to act as she chooses. Her husband will know how to defend his honor!"

"I should have said so, too," said Nielsen peaceably. "But it is rather *your* conduct that gives rise to a contrary view. It is precisely for the reasons you bring forward that I should be glad to spend a day with Mr. Weston, and I am convinced that it would lead us more pleasantly and quickly to a satisfactory result than your rudeness. For you were rude."

The two Englishmen consulted.

Then Throgmorton said:

"I find no reason to alter my expressions. I am frank with you; I don't like you, and I beg you to act accordingly."

Nielsen looked at Weston.

"I agree with my brother-in-law," said the latter. "If I thought you dared to approach Mrs. Weston with any such design as he alluded to, I should take it differently. I trust Mrs. Weston in everything. But I do not desire your acquaintance, and I ask you to mind your own business."

With these words Mr. Weston turned his back on Nielsen and slouched away.

Throgmorton followed.

The Doctor was sitting among the sand-dunes, painting, when Nielsen slowly made his way to him across the sand.

"Well?" he asked.

"That little scheme went to pot," said Nielsen. "The two louts were as rude as bears." And he told all that had happened.

"So the scheme has gone to pot," said the Doctor; "but I expect you're in just the humor to take these two fellows by the scruff of the neck, eh?"

"I can't say their behavior has made me feel any gentler," said Nielsen; "but there's something in it, after all. They have a sort of right to be left in peace. We must change our tactics. Let us think a little about what we have to do. There's no hurry. Anyhow, to-morrow's trip won't come to anything. And I'll just go down and countermand the boat."

"Do that," said the Doctor, and went on with his painting.

Nielsen went down to the beach, where he found Bolle Jens still busy with the *Betty*.

"I shan't be able to go to-morrow, after all," he said.

“That’s all right,” said Jens. “The two Englishmen have been talking to me about the same thing. They offered me a good bit extra for the boat. I wouldn’t take it, because I had promised you. Now I’ll take the Englishmen’s money; it’ll be a good thing to get it into Danish hands, eh?”

So that was settled.

But when the Doctor and Nielsen were talking together later on, Koldby smiled and asked Nielsen if he wouldn’t now overcome his chivalrous prejudices and make up his mind to attack where the stronghold was weakest.

Nielsen thought for a moment.

“My dear fellow,” said the Doctor, “you’ll be forced to. And think of what an opportunity you’ll have; when the two louts are out at sea, plotting evil, you’ll perhaps be able to clear up the whole thing with *her*. I wouldn’t miss such an opportunity. Good heavens, they are two men—but she is a woman, and you, my boy, are a cunning dog.”

Nielsen would not answer, but that evening he took counsel with himself.

The Doctor left him alone.

CHAPTER V

It was past noon, and the wind was getting up, with scuds of rain. Nielsen stood at the door of the hotel and nodded to the Doctor, who was coming out of his room.

"Now they've hoisted two balls," said Nielsen. "It's going to be serious. They are all out at sea, and the wind's northwest. We shall see the lifeboat to-day."

The Doctor rubbed his hands. "We must go up the hill," said he. "What luck that the two Englishmen were so uncivil yesterday. Otherwise you'd be sitting out in the bay now, tossing in Bolle Jens' boat. It's best to have solid earth under your feet, what?"

"I hope it will be all right," said Nielsen, shaking his head. "Fourteen motor-boats are out, and four smacks, besides Bolle Jens' *Betty* under sail. They are all men with families."

"Yes—and our two Englishmen. If anything should happen to Throgmorton and Weston, we should only have the two Amys to fall back upon.

And then I'm afraid we should never get our mystery cleared up. The whole thing may slip away from us now."

"Are you really thinking of that, Doctor? Come on, it's pouring, and the wind has got hold of these rowans as though it would uproot them. We must get on to the hill."

They went out into the market-place. At every door they saw the inmates looking out. The visitors from the hotel crept forward against the gale, wrapped in waterproofs and shawls, and down the street there was a clattering and rattling—it was the carter's men riding the horses home in case they should be wanted to haul out the lifeboat.

"There goes the third ball aloft," said the Doctor, and over the low roofs they could see the three balls swinging in the wind from the gaff of the signal-mast.

They fought their way uphill through the sand, which cut them in the face and flew across the rising ground and roofs. Up by the signal station people stood huddled together, bending their heads against the wind, women and children, looking out over the bay.

All the boats were out. The sea had got up, and the foam was flying along the beach, while the water gradually gained its way among wheelbarrows and herring-boxes. Those who had stayed at home went down and saved what they could. But they were mostly old people and children. The men were all at sea.

Out on the shoals, where the seas were breaking, they could now see the last boats, one—two—three—four.

They were motor-boats, tossing like nutshells in the heavy seas.

"The lifeboat's going out," they cried on the hill; but her crew was away at sea. The old men pulled on their sea-boots and oilskins. The reserve crew was at home, and now some of the boats were coming to shore down below. The gale increased; the wind howled in masts, rigging, and ropes, and the sea thundered on the beach.

"We must go down," said Nielsen.

The sand was drifting like snow over the slopes and the two men turned their backs to the blast. They reached the shore. Four of the boats were in, and five more were by the nearest shoal. They had an easier job then. The motors hissed and rattled; the boats turned their sides and ran along the troughs of the waves, then steered sharply and rode over the seas into smooth water.

Boat after boat appeared from outside.

They rose among the waves, turned like herrings and shot in. A short shock, a thump on the bottom, and a hiss of the engine. Then they stopped, and all hands got over the side. Slowly, steadily, and surely, as in fair weather, their accustomed backs carried the boats up the beach. Everyone lent a hand, women, children, and visitors. It was a case of getting it done quickly.

Now all the motors are in, and the smacks begin to show up over the shoals. They tossed like corks among the breakers, with their fluttering sails, like little black bags on the short masts, right down in the water.

Then into the midst of the waves, over the last sandbank, and in to land.

Now they are all in. All except Bolle Jens. "All except Bolle Jens," the word went from mouth to mouth along the beach. But Bolle Jens was not in sight.

"We must go up on to the hill again," said Nielsen. "That boat's missing, and it's our boat. They are out there on the Great Bank, and it took them longer to reach it than the others.

Silius Hansen says his son was within hail of them until the wind got up. They were heading for the open sea."

"Perhaps they're going to make the same trip as Lars Jensen's crew last year—over to Norway. What do you think, Silius?" asked the Doctor.

Silius shook his head. "In this weather? No, Bolle Jens is a dare-devil sort of chap, but he won't risk that. Isn't that——?"

It was not the boat.

The rain swept along the foam on the beach, and lashed the breaking waves; but there was nothing to be seen.

They ascended the hill again.

Down in the gap the lifeboat had stuck fast. Eight sweating, steaming horses were dragging at the harness and ropes, while the drivers shouted and plied their whips. The wheels were buried in the sand. Then one of the ropes of the traces broke with a jerk, and all hands rushed like a swarm of ants to mend the trace. They all put their backs into it. The heavy trolley shook and the boat heeled over in its cradle. Then it went up through the sand-drifts and down on to the level road through the gap, with a creaking of poles and harness, while the tackle rolled about in the boat. The stream of people from the hill followed through the dunes, through the drifting sand, down to the boats.

Mrs. Weston went up to Nielsen.

"Is there any danger?" she asked.

Nielsen gave her a serious look.

"It is always dangerous to land on this coast when the sea is running as it is now. And the boat is not in sight. But we have hopes."

"Is the lifeboat going out?" she asked. Her voice sounded quite calm and collected.

The Doctor came up.

"It won't go out until there is something for it to do, and if it waits much longer, it won't go out at all."

"Why?" she asked.

"Because it won't be able to. The sea is getting up so that it will be a difficult thing for the boat to hold its own over the second shoal."

Mrs. Weston said nothing.

"It was unfortunate that they chose to-day to go out," said the Doctor. "There was some breeze this morning."

"But Mr. Nielsen wanted to go, too," said Mrs. Weston.

The Doctor nodded.

Down on the beach they were shoving the lifeboat to the water's edge, while the horses took away the trolley, as artillery horses go off with the limber when the gun comes into action.

"There's a boat!" shouted Nielsen, pointing over the bay.

"It's they——"

The Doctor shook his head.

"No, it's too big. That's a Lönstrup cutter, going north. There's another of them. They are decked boats, they'll be all right. Shall we go down to the boats?"

Mrs. Weston wrapped her mackintosh closely about her and gave another turn to the shawl round her neck. Nielsen looked at her. He seemed to know that shawl. It was of the same pattern as the shawl he had found in the cellar. He went up to her.

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

"She smiled. "Afraid? why, I'm on dry land."

"I mean, for the two out there."

Her face darkened. She said nothing.

"Let us go," said the Doctor. "They're pointing out at something from the beach. I can't see anything, but the fishermen have better eyes than we."

A crowd had gathered round the lifeboat. There was only one missing, Bolle Jens' *Betty,* the only sailing-boat in the place. The visitors crept into shelter behind the great red lifeboat; they spoke in low, solemn voices to the fishermen who stood up in the boat in their stiff, wet oilskins. Old Larsen, the captain, stood looking out over the sea with his long telescope.

"The two Englishmen," went the hushed whisper among the crowd, and all turned towards Mrs. Weston as she approached, accompanied by the two gentlemen.

The local doctor came up to his patient, bowing. Dr. Madsen was a pleasant man, who had sailed with the Thingvalla boats and talked English pretty well.

"Bolle Jens is the most experienced fisherman in the place," he said. "He has been in worse things than this. There is no ground for uneasiness. You'll see, it will be all right."

"I am not at all uneasy," replied Mrs. Weston.

Nielsen looked at her. No, she was not at all uneasy, no more than if the two men had nothing to do with her.

"Doctor," whispered Dr. Madsen to Koldby. "These Englishwomen are strange creatures. Look at her, she doesn't change a feature, as cool as a cucumber—now she's smiling at your friend there. They have nerves of steel, these ladies of the smoky island."

Dr. Koldby shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps she doesn't care what happens."

"To her husband and her brother?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Aren't you at all afraid?" asked Nielsen. He had just caught the Doctor's words to Madsen.

Mrs. Weston looked at him sharply.

"What would be the use?" she said.

Nielsen thought she almost smiled as she said it.

"Look at the two women there," said Nielsen sternly. "They are the wives of Niels Hansen and Jens Petersen. All their hope is out there—they are staring out to sea."

Mrs. Weston interrupted him.

"So am I, but what good does it do? If they are to stay there, they will stay there. I wish they would put that boat into the water. It's no use here."

There was a murmur among the crowd, and

arms were stretched out towards something outside.

"It's the boat," said Nielsen shortly.

It was the boat.

The crowd parted and the lifeboat's crew put their shoulders to the great red hull. Slowly it grated its way down over the sand.

Then it floated, the tall figures in their yellow oilskins vaulted in over the gunwale, and old Larsen stood aft in his heavy black cloak. The boat gave a roll in the breakers, and they got the oars out. There was a creaking of wood and a clanking of the metal rowlocks, and then the boat shot forward into the waves. They broke over her and vanished in foam, but she rose again.

Then they heaved out the sack aft, and towed it after the boat to keep her steady in the water. Between the two nearest sandbanks she went forward smoothly, then her stem met the breakers and the boat rose straight out of the water and slowly sank again in the trough of the waves.

Those on shore had their eyes fixed on the long red boat, which was now tossing broadside-on, as though trying to find a diagonal path among the waves.

The *Betty* came full in view, out beyond the last shoal. She was under foresail only. The rain was beating down, obscuring everything, and out of the uniform gray the two tossing shadows appeared, the *Betty* before the wind, heading for land with her broad bows, and the lifeboat, which had now changed her course, making her way towards the other boat over the second shoal.

When the sea got under her, she showed her whole red bow with the plug-holes, seemed to collect herself and made a bound right into the next wave, then turned and tried to slip into a valley between the seas. Now she was over the second shoal. The *Betty* was setting her mainsail.

Old Silius shook his head.

"What's the matter?" asked Koldby.

Silius answered:

"You'll see, Bolle Jens won't have the lifeboat, he'll try to get to land without help. It's the way with the youngsters, and I shouldn't wonder if the two Englishmen didn't back him up. They're tough customers, the English."

Now the lifeboat was nearing the third shoal, but the *Betty* heaved her white hull out of the waves and was in smooth water.

"He cleared that," said Silius, "but he's got the worst to come."

The lifeboat was shortening the distance between her and the fisherman.

" He's mad if he tries to land in this weather," said Koldby. " Why the devil doesn't he take the boat? "

" He's got a good catch on board, you see," said Silius; " and that's lost if he has to leave the boat. You see, his boat is insured, but not the catch, and if they leave the boat, the storm will take her ashore somewhere north of the hill, and the catch will be washed overboard. He may have a hundred crowns' worth of lobsters, judging by what the others have caught. Bolle Jens won't let that go."

The fisherman's wife came up to Silius.

" Don't you think Jens will go in the lifeboat? " she asked.

" It would be like him not to," answered the old man.

" God have mercy on him! " she whispered.

" As far as that goes, Jens is good enough. But we mustn't tempt Providence."

The woman dried her eyes with her hand. " It was a storm just like this when Jens Molle was lost," she said in a low voice.

" It was so," was the quiet answer.

"It looks now as if they had some sense, after all," said the Doctor. "They have taken a rope from the lifeboat."

The two boats lay tossing in the waves. It was smoother water between the shoals. The *Betty's* sail was hauled down, and the mast was swaying from one point of the horizon to the other among the white crests. Now they were hauling the fishing-boat alongside the lifeboat.

The seas on the second shoal rose between the boat and the land so that those on shore could not see what was happening. The boats separated.

The lifeboat turned her bow to the land; on the second shoal they could see right under her as she rose over the crest of a sea.

"Jesus Christ!" cried the fisherman's wife, "now Jens is setting sail again."

The *Betty's* canvas went up. So Jens was going to tempt Providence.

"Your friends are in the lifeboat," said Nielsen to Mrs. Weston.

"They must be," she said.

But her face was unmoved.

There were several fathoms now between the lifeboat and the *Betty;* above the breakers they could see the fishing-boat luffing to find a way among the seas. The lifeboat shot in over the last shoal.

Suddenly there was a shrill scream from the beach. The *Betty* rose among the breakers on the shoal, stood quivering in a shower of foam, and then a contrary wave took her on the other side and turned her clean over, so that her green bottom shone in the gray water.

There was a long cry from everyone on the shore.

The red boat turned and plunged into the waves again. The rain was driving along the foam. Then there was another glimpse of the green hull out yonder.

Astride on the keel of the capsized boat sat two figures, hanging on for their lives, while the foam swept over them. The boat sank down between the waves, and like a shark the red lifeboat darted forward towards them.

"They'll do it," said Silius. "It's Jens and Niels; now they'll reach them."

The lifeboat slipped up to the side of the capsized boat, and a ringing shout proclaimed that they had reached them.

Then the boat rose in the air again.

"Why don't they come to shore?" asked the Doctor.

"I don't know," whispered Silius.

The lifeboat was not coming to shore.

A hushed whisper ran along the beach.

"There were five in the boat," said Silius. "Niels Hansen's son and the two Englishmen, with Niels and Jens. There's one or two of them left out there, perhaps three—the Lord have mercy on them! The current has carried them ten fathoms north already. They're lost!"

Minutes passed like hours, and the broad red boat came in over the shoals and grounded with a roar on the beach.

Niels Hansen's wife knelt on the shore, and the crowd pressed round the boat with hurried questions.

Nielsen followed Mrs. Weston closely; she had not said a word, but she saw what had happened.

Now the men were climbing out of the boat.

Nielsen saw the tall, lanky Englishman swing himself over the bow of the boat without waiting for the rest; he threw a glance at the crowd and hurried towards Mrs. Weston.

"It was John," was all he said.

Nielsen saw her bosom heave and sink. Then, without saying a word, she walked up the beach by Weston's side.

But among the crowd the news passed from man to man:

“One of the Englishmen was left out yonder.”

CHAPTER VI

A STRANGELY solemn silence hung over the hotel when the visitors assembled for the evening meal. They had been talking about the drowned Englishman, had said all they had to say, had forgotten and forgiven what they had against him, in their respect for his courage. Whatever else he might have been, he was a plucky fellow. Now he lay out yonder; perhaps the sea would keep him; or the waves would wash him ashore somewhere along the coast to the north.

The ladies shuddered.

Mrs. Weston did not come to supper. Mr. Weston, however, took his usual place by the side of Nielsen. He spoke in a subdued voice, as was fitting. He did not seem sorry; Nielsen understood that. He could understand that the bond that had kept these two together was not friendship—and he knew more than the others. That it was Throgmorton who had been the leader all through Nielsen had no doubt. His death made the task lighter. So long as Throgmorton was alive, he had to be careful; that man shrank from nothing. Now he lay out yonder in his watery grave.

Now the time was come.

Weston told his story. The gale had caught them while they were cruising on the Great Bank. Capricious and sudden, as it comes in summer time on the Skagerrack; and Bolle Jens had steered for home. The sea got higher, but they made their way steadily. Weston had no idea there was any danger. When they saw the signal on the hill the skipper asked if they would go in the lifeboat.

Throgmorton said they would do as Jens wished.

So they decided to do without the lifeboat; there were two hundred pounds of lobsters in the hold.

They were worth at the current price about eighteenpence a pound, and Jens thought that was too much to throw away. But when they came to the third shoal he had his doubts all the same, and made a signal to the lifeboat. Weston and Niels Hansen's son went in the lifeboat. Niels didn't want the youngster to be lost as well as himself, if they came to grief.

Throgmorton would not go.

So they let him stay, and there he stayed.

They thought he must have been caught by a rope or some of the tackle and lay under the boat. She had gone north, keel upwards, and would probably be driven ashore near Lyngby. Weston was going up there that same evening, with some fishermen, to look for the body.

Nielsen offered to go with him, but the Englishman did not seem to want him.

"Throgmorton is dead," said he. "What has to be done, I can do alone."

"And Mrs. Weston?" asked Nielsen.

"She has retired," answered Weston. "This has been a shock to her."

That was the end of their conversation that evening.

The wind dropped at sunset, and it was quite a fine evening. Nielsen and the Doctor went down to the beach and watched the sun set. The sea was still surging and roaring outside, but the wave beats were long and slackening, like the end of a horse's gallop, before it falls into a walk. There were many people on the shore, and they were all making for the northward. They involuntarily turned their eyes to the water's edge, looking for the dead Englishman.

The custom-house officer had driven north with Weston and the constable from Brönderslev. This official had been summoned by telephone. He did not speak English, but Jens acted as interpreter. Nielsen and the Doctor walked northward over Fureby Beck.

"Now we have reached the third stage, Doctor," said Nielsen. "Now we shall have to set to work. I suppose they will leave here, and then——?"

The Doctor nodded. "That's possible. Throgmorton was the leader, we were clear enough about that. Mr. Weston and his wife will be easier to tackle. Probably they are only indirectly accessory—according to our hypothesis. Miss Derry is the chief mourner. I am sorry for her. This would be a text for an edifying sermon if the same misfortune did not often happen to honest fathers of families in the exercise of their daily work. That's a thing that always interferes with the theory of natural justice, and you'll have to give up that part of your programme, Nielsen. But to return to Cranbourne Grove: Major Johnson is avenged. What do you think of doing now?"

Nielsen drew himself up.

"First of all, I shall tell Weston that we know all; the murderer is dead, the other two suffered by his presence, as we have noticed long ago. The shadow of his crime still hangs over their lives. Let us clear it all up and set them free again."

"You're in too much of a hurry, Nielsen," said the Doctor, stopping in his walk.

The sun was now below the horizon; the two men were standing beneath the cliffs of Fureby; all the other visitors had turned back, and there was no one else in sight.

"We have not made any mistake," said Nielsen. "We cannot have made any mistake here."

The Doctor turned towards the sea; a heavy swell was rolling in after the storm.

Suddenly he seized Nielsen's arm.

"There," he said, "look there!"

Nielsen stared at the sea. Close to their feet the breakers had just washed ashore the body of the drowned Englishman. Helplessly confined in its long brown waterproof, with its face downwards in the sand, the body was slowly heaved up on the beach.

"If you and I were not two hardened freethinkers," said the Doctor, "we should fold our hands and say it was the will of God. It is all quite natural; he had to come ashore. He has come ashore to us."

The body was lying at the water's edge, and the back-wash of the wave caught the mackintosh, as though it were trying to draw the body back again. But it lay high and dry when the wave retreated.

Nielsen stood thoughtful and irresolute.

The Doctor knelt down and turned the body over, so that it lay on its back. The face was calm and not swollen. Throgmorton looked like a man asleep. The eyes were half-open and the beard was full of foam. Quickly the Doctor opened the mackintosh, and before Nielsen grasped what he wanted he had drawn a little brown pocket-book from the inner pocket of the dead man.

"What are you about, Doctor?" asked Nielsen involuntarily.

"I want to see if his papers are in order," said the Doctor.

It was still twilight; light enough to read. The Doctor emptied the pocket-book. There were several bank-notes and a few papers.

Nielsen shook his head.

"This won't do, Doctor. Up to now we have avoided any conflict with the police; this is illegal."

The Doctor looked up.

"Let it be. He can keep the money. I'm going to look at the papers. It wasn't for nothing that the fellow came ashore just where we were."

Nielsen shook his head.

The Doctor unfolded the papers, which had stuck together. The mackintosh and the tightly-buttoned jacket had contributed to preserve them, and the little pocket-book had done the rest. The writing was smeared but not illegible.

The Doctor jumped to his feet.

"Nielsen," said he, "here are four letters addressed to Throgmorton and three addressed to Charles Weston, Esq. What was this man doing with Weston's letters in his pocket-book? I shall keep these letters, you understand. I shall do more, I'll search the corpse. He must turn out his pockets, now we've got him."

Nielsen involuntarily looked round. They were alone on the beach.

The Doctor searched carefully and quietly. There were no more papers on the corpse. Then the Doctor took the watch from its pocket and opened it.

"Nielsen," said he, "look here! Inside the case there's the name Charles Weston, 1885. Throgmorton goes about with papers addressed to Weston, and his watch has Weston's name engraved in it. If it had been Johnson's, you and I would have understood it. But Weston——. Mr. Weston is driving along the coast, looking out for the body; he has promised a reward to anyone who finds it. Now, I'm going to keep these articles, you understand. We shall be doing Mr. Weston a service thereby, and I am much mistaken if these things do not turn out to be the key to the riddle. I am also inclined to think we shall get Mr. Weston to talk."

Nielsen buttoned up his coat nervously.

"And what then?"

"Over in London we left a corpse to take care of itself, Nielsen. We'll do the same here. Let it lie there quite quietly, and go home. You'll see, it'll be one of the natives that finds it. Should Mr. Weston and the police find it, he will scarcely call their attention to the fact that anything is missing. I don't fancy Mr. Weston is particularly anxious for police investigations.

He asked me something this afternoon about what the authorities would do. It wasn't because he wanted the authorities set in motion. Rather the contrary. Now we'll turn the corpse over, as it lay before. Come along."

So they went homewards, and the tide retreated from the dead Englishman, who lay quiet, with his face in the sand, among the little shells of the beach. It was quiet in the hotel that evening. The piano was silent, the visitors sat in little groups and spoke in hushed tones. In the Doctor's room sat Nielsen and Koldby with lighted cigars, reading the letters they had found.

"We must put them in regular order," said the Doctor, "and try to make them out."

Four of them were business letters from Sydney Armstrong.

The first of these was dated London, April 25, and contained a brief intimation that Major Johnson had duly taken possession of the house in Cranbourne Grove.

The second was dated April 28, and acknowledged receipt of Mr. Throgmorton's letter from Southampton, with the intimation that Mr. Armstrong was willing to find a tenant for Major Johnson's house.

The third letter accompanied a receipt for fees paid, and stated that the Major's letters would be sent, as requested, to Hjörring, *poste restante.* The date was stained and illegible.

The fourth letter contained a question, as to whether Mr. Armstrong might let the house again when the three months had expired, and an intimation that the new tenant was willing to take the house for six months.

The last paragraph was the most interesting; it ran as follows:

"As far as Miss Derry is concerned, I may state that this young lady has not been to see me since my telegram of May 4. It seemed that she has calmed down and given up her search for the Major. As far as I know, there has been nothing about his journey in the papers; it appears that his trip to Burma is believed in. I hope the Major has received the two letters I sent him. The two gentlemen at Cranbourne Grove have not sent on any letters for the Major, and it is probable that none have come. I hope also that the Major received the check I sent him the other day. Until the middle of July there will be no more money to send."

The date was illegible.

These four letters were addressed to Mr. Throgmorton.

The three letters to Mr. Weston were more damaged by sea-water. The paper was not so good, and it cost the two inquirers much trouble to read them. Two of them seemed without interest; they were dated the year before and treated of money matters. The writer, Charles Smith, claimed a sum of £100 from Mr. Weston on account of a loan, and threatened legal proceedings. There was nothing in the letters which could explain how they found their way into Mr. Throgmorton's pocket-book.

The third letter was interesting. Much of it was illegible, but what could be made out was of such importance that Dr. Koldby at once made a copy of it:

"Dear Sir—Although I do not know you personally, I am obliged to write to you. You are aware that for some time . . . (illegible) to Major Johnson. You know the Major and his unfortunate weakness for gambling. Also his weakness . . . (illegible) be unknown to you. Mrs. Weston is just as unknown to me as yourself, but a mutual friend has told me that in any case you have been a gentleman. After what happened last October, I have the right to say *have been.* It is an unusual thing for a girl to write to a man about his wife—(here there were five lines illegible) . . . I cannot threaten, my father will not help me, as you know. After what has happened I am forced to believe that you and . . . (illegible) will take advantage of this. I offer to ransom James—to ransom him with money, I say. I leave you to settle the price, I shall pay what I can. Look upon it as a piece of business; we can meet in Clarendon Road, at the house of a friend of mine. Perhaps you are mistaken if you suppose I am quite defenceless and . . . (illegible) . . . I have.

"I remain, ready to treat with you,

"A. DERRY.

"To Charles Weston, Esq."

That was a valuable document. What could not be read could be guessed at, and the date was three months old. It concerned Major Johnson and was addressed to Mr. Weston. The writer was Miss Amy Derry. But why in the world was this letter found in Throgmorton's pocket-book? Mr. Weston was alive, was with him, and yet Mr. Throgmorton went about with Mr. Weston's watch and kept his letters.

"Nielsen," said Dr. Koldby. "I begin to think we shall have to go back to the question of the murdered man's identity. We have taken it for granted that he was Major Johnson. Many things pointed to that, but we may have made a mistake."

Nielsen nodded; his thoughts were taking the same direction as the Doctor's.

The Doctor continued:

"Let us, anyhow, begin with a hypothesis. That it is Throgmorton who is drowned, is probable."

"Certain," said Nielsen.

"No—I beg your pardon—not certain. We thought Throgmorton and his sister and her husband had murdered Johnson. We now find that Throgmorton wears a watch with Weston's name and carries letters addressed to Weston in his pocket-book. From this we conclude that the Weston we know, Mrs. Weston's husband, who sits by us at table, is not the Weston to whom these letters are addressed."

Nielsen interposed.

"Let us say at once, Doctor, that he isn't Weston at all, but Major Johnson."

"Possibly," said the Doctor. "We next conclude that——"

Nielsen interrupted again:

"That the man whose body we found in the cellar at Cranbourne Grove is not Johnson, but Weston."

"That is too hastily concluded," said the Doctor. "Don't let us jump at conclusions. That is one of your criminological maxims—which, by the way, you abandon on every possible occasion with the most charming inconsistency. We have a right to conclude that the murdered man is not Johnson, because by this doubt we open up a prospect of a better conclusion. We have reason to believe that these people do not go under their proper baptismal names, but at the same time, in consideration of the post office and the telegraph, and especially of Mr. Sydney Armstrong, they are compelled to be known by certain fixed names which they cannot get away from. Obviously, the name of Johnson is one that is to be concealed. The name of Throgmorton is necessary, because it covers a business relation. The name of Weston is not necessary as far as the men are concerned, but it is necessary for *her*. We, therefore, have the right to suppose that one of the gentlemen is Mr. Johnson, and we are inclined to think that this is Mr. Weston's right name. That these two people do not live together like a married couple, we have already remarked; and that the fault lies with her, must be obvious to you, who have paid somewhat incautious attentions to the lady—who is charming, I admit. So that the murdered man is either Weston or Throgmorton."

"But Armstrong had seen Throgmorton," objected Nielsen.

"Do we know that?" asked the Doctor; "and do we know when? Do we, in fact, know anything at all about Weston and Throgmorton beyond what we can guess, and what this letter of Miss Derry's tells us? As to Major Johnson, we know that last year he was compelled to leave the Army on account of a card scandal. We know that the name of Weston is mentioned here. We know, also, that Mrs. Weston has played a part, but Throgmorton has been for us the leader. Is Throgmorton Weston? Is he not Mrs. Weston's husband rather than her brother? She is not particularly gracious to either of the two men. And then, is the murdered man Throgmorton? Be honest, Nielsen; neither you nor I know that. On the other hand, we know that we have added another irregularity to our previous one. We are now pretty deeply implicated in this affair, and we shall come off cheapest if we have to answer for it in Denmark, where we are known and have a certain position."

"You mean that we should go to the police?" asked Nielsen. "Choose a local officer of justice, of the home-made Danish type, and let him loose on the mystery? In other words, cause the arrest of Mrs. Weston and Major Johnson just at the moment when we feel certain that these two are innocent, and when the murderer, as you remarked on the beach, has received his punishment."

"I never remarked anything so stupid," said the Doctor coolly. "If you will remember, I said the very reverse. But I agree with you: it will be an unpleasant business for Mrs. Weston, for the Major, and for Amy. Amy of the cat, who is the one I am most partial to—though you, being a young man, seem inclined to favor Mrs. Weston. For us two it can't be such an expensive entertainment, but in any case it will not be very handsome of us to take refuge among our home authorities if the others are to be exposed to unpleasantness—and think of the horror of it: a Royal Danish police magistrate!"

Nielsen smiled. "That is a redeeming feature, Doctor. But we ought to exclude the police, all the same. Let us set to work at once. Let us write to Miss Amy Derry and invite her over here."

"When you have had your first silly ideas washed off by a friendly douche from the undersigned, you turn out to be quite an intelligent young man, Nielsen."

Thus the Doctor accepted the idea, and next morning the post cart conveyed from Lökken to Hjörring a letter written in Nielsen's hand, addressed to Miss A. Derry, London, as follows:

"DEAR MADAM,

"For reasons which you will learn later, I have been looking for Major Johnson, and have found him here with Mrs. Weston. It is all more serious than you think. You must come. It would be advisable for Mr. Sydney Armstrong to come too. You may tell him from his tenants at 48 Cranbourne Grove, that Mr. Throgmorton has been drowned in a boating accident in the Skagerrack, and that the best thing he can do is to come to Lökken with you as soon as he can. I cannot write more, but you promised to trust to me.

"Yours faithfully,
"HOLGER NIELSEN."

It was a good day's work the two men had done.

The same evening the report spread that the body of the drowned Englishman had been found half-way between Fureby Beck and Lyngby church, by his brother-in-law and the local custom-house officer, accompanied by the mounted policeman of the district.

The Englishman was, of course, stone dead. The district magistrate came himself to view the body, on account of possible negotiations with the English authorities.

CHAPTER VII

"MR. NEILSEN," said Weston, next day after lunch, as he politely accosted Nielsen on his way to the beach, "you are a lawyer, and you speak English. You will allow me a question, which I am obliged to ask, and which is excusable under the circumstances?"

"Of course," said Nielsen. "I am ready to give you all the guidance I can."

"Aha," he thought, "it's the police."

The Englishman went on:

"Have you any objection to going up to my room, where we can talk undisturbed?"

"Certainly not," answered Nielsen.

They went up to Weston's room, and then it came.

"You are a lawyer, Mr. Nielsen. I am a stranger in this country. The fishermen do not understand affairs of this kind, and the police official who was with me yesterday is evidently only a subordinate. I therefore ask you: what will happen now?"

"An examination of the body," said Nielsen; "a perfectly simple business, by which the chief of police, or his deputy, constituted as sheriff, in conjunction with the district doctor, will establish the fact that Mr. Throgmorton is dead, and the cause of death. Probably the crew of the boat will be examined, to find out whether anyone was to blame. Obviously, no one was to blame—and so the thing is done."

"But how about Mrs. Weston and me?"

"You will probably be called upon to give your explanation. As to Mr. Throgmorton's identity, of course there can be no question. You know him, and Mrs. Weston is his sister, isn't she?"

Nielsen stole a glance at the Englishman. He thought Mr. Weston was rather nervous, so he added:

"The question of identity will be of no importance here, where you and Mrs. Weston will simply say that you know who the deceased is."

"Don't they require an oath, or witnesses, or something of that sort?" asked the Englishman, quite calmly and naturally; still Nielsen thought his voice trembled a little.

"Not a bit," said Nielsen. "No, the whole thing is a formality, or scarcely that."

"But the question of inheritance?" suggested the Englishman tentatively.

"Will be settled in England," replied Nielsen shortly.

Mr. Weston seemed relieved.

Nielsen added: "However, it will be necessary for you or Mrs. Weston, or both of you, to appear, not before the police-court, but before the registrar for probate—it is the same man, by the way, who discharges both functions. You see, in Denmark, as soon as a person dies, the question of his estate is gone into by the local court. From the point of view of the private individual this is more practical, but the English arrangement gives more work to the members of my profession. You will have to see the registrar at Hjörring one day and make a statement as to the deceased's estate. The affair will then be referred through the Danish Foreign Office to the English authorities concerned."

"Will an oath be required here?"

Nielsen smiled—but suppressed his smile at once, when he saw the Englishman frown.

"Certainly, they will require an oath. That is, they will want a statement on oath that you and Mrs. Weston have known Mr. Throgmorton for so many years and can speak as to his identity. That is what I should require, if I were registrar. Whether it is necessary, I don't know, but in any case it can make no difference to you or Mrs. Weston."

"Of course not," said the Englishman—and added: "So it won't be to-day?"

"Certainly not," said Nielsen. "But if you want my assistance, I am willing to help you with the question of inheritance. You understand, of course, I don't practice, but you may dispose of me in any way."

"Thanks," said the Englishman. "I'll talk to Mrs. Weston about it."

Nielsen then left him.

Koldby was dozing in Dr. Madsen's beach chair. The weather was warm and still; all traces of the storm had disappeared from the sea and the sands, but Bolle Jens' *Betty* lay with three holes in her side and her mast gone. The lobster-box had gone to sea, and the insurance people were making difficulties about it. And the dead Englishman lay up at the fire-engine house.

"Doctor," said Nielsen—they were alone among the beach chairs, "he's alarmed about the oath of identity. Now the plot thickens."

"And the watch?"

"He said nothing about it."

"He didn't mention it to the custom-house man either. That excellent official has just described the finding of the body to me—with all details. But he said nothing of the watch. Funny, isn't it? What is he doing now?"

"Mr. Weston is holding a conference with Mrs. Weston. I have given him to understand that he will get off easily to-day. It will be worse when the probate court has its turn."

"Then they'll lie?"

"He will, perhaps, but what will she do?"

"She will lie, too," said the Doctor. "What else should they do?"

"And their oath?"

"My dear Nielsen, you are one of the most determined opponents of the oath as an institution, and you have lectured at the Workingmen's Institute on the impropriety of requiring an oath, a lecture which hit the mark like all your others—and now you stand here insisting on the excellence of the oath. You must not misunderstand me; it is only what I expected of you, but it's funny, all the same, isn't it?"

"I have never asserted that the oath might not be used in certain cases to get at the truth—it would be foolish to deny it. I simply insist that all compulsion of the truth is irreconcilable with sound principles of justice."

"Of course," laughed the Doctor. "The police principle is unjust, the criminals have all the rights on their side. And that's what this whole affair is based on. I don't mind; long live Progress and modern criminology! The madder the better!"

Nielsen was a little nettled. "There is no question of criminals' rights. If Mrs. Weston has reasons for concealing the dead man's name, she should not be compelled to disclose it with threats of eternal damnation."

"She may have sense enough not to believe in eternal damnation, my friend. If you ask me, I don't believe she does."

"Well, penal servitude, then," said Nielsen impatiently. "It comes to the same thing."

"No, stop a bit, young man," said the Doctor. "It's much worse. I'd risk eternal damnation any day, especially now that the bishops in agreement with the Church of Rome have arranged a comfortable little Purgatory for repentant deceased persons. Anyhow, we don't know anything about that. But penal servitude is decidedly unpleasant, and therefore useful for the present purpose. You are inconsistent, as usual, my dear sir."

"Not a bit. I say that you ought not to force people to declare what they would rather conceal. Criminals have a right to lie. We others become criminals by lying. There's no sense in that. I am opposed on principle to all oaths, but I acknowledge that they are much more modern than thumbscrews and red-hot tongs, and perhaps more effectual, too. But they have just as little to do with the truth as torture has. If these people have any real interest to serve by lying and perjuring themselves, then they'll do so."

"I think so, too," said the Doctor; "but allow me to remark that it was you who were trying to make out the contrary."

"That was to clear my ideas," said Nielsen nervously. "She'll come to see me this afternoon; I have offered my services."

"That was noble of you."

The Doctor smiled.

"I don't want to get her into a difficulty. Quite the contrary."

"Are you going to tell her the little story of Cranbourne Grove, eh?"

"No, not yet."

"Very well, Nielsen. Then you are going to act in this case exactly like Society, which uses the means it has, in default of better ones. That's the root of the matter. It's no use talking of ideal right and ideal duty, there is another thing that is called expediency. Society has to keep the criminals off us. It tries to do so as well as it can. That's all. This is done without theories and by the means which expediency offers. Afterwards you clever lawyers may theorize as much as you like, and knock your theories to pieces again, for all I care. It is only a sport. No, give me realities, my son. Realities for me, if you please."

"Of course, you're wrong again," said Nielsen, in a friendly tone; "because, as usual, you are mixing up theory and practice. The theories interest me, because, after all, they have an influence on practice. For this reason radical theories are worth more than gold. The law of self-preservation makes our practice egoistic, and egoism and conservatism are one. But as far as practice—as far as the present case is concerned, I am firmly determined to try and find out whether Mrs. Weston is connected with our mystery by direct complicity."

"And then?"

"Then I shall still have the right to delay the next step. I mean to let her say what she will say, and not to tell her what I know. And, further, I mean to drag the matter on until we have Miss Derry over here. Then the Major will be betrayed, and Mrs. Weston will be forced to be frank with us."

The Doctor put his head on one side.

"My dear Cato Junior, it would suit you much better to play an open game. Why, hang it, you are the champion of truth and the rights of man. Why on earth must you then use the famous double tongue? Live according to your pure doctrine, sir. Live according to that."

Nielsen rose and stood a moment with his eyes on the shining water; then he turned to the Doctor and said:

"O man of little faith, know that when man was created in imperfection, as we are told, then the Lie was placed by the side of man to screen his imperfection. By means of the Lie man became like his prototype; the Lie conceals that which shall be revealed. The Lie became everything, it became truth itself. We simply cannot dispense with the Lie; only by confessing it daily, could we be rid of it; but then the world would come to an end, and the last *man* would die!"

To these doctrines Koldby made no comment, but settled himself comfortably in his chair to resume his doze; and his friend took the hint and returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII

The viewing of the body was conducted with solemn stillness. Mr. Throgmorton was dead, he could not come to life again. No blame could attach to the skipper of the boat; the North Sea and adjacent waters have their whims and humors: it sometimes pleases them to treat their guests so that they die of the treatment. Nevertheless, the North Sea continues to be plowed, and the medical faculty occasionally has to attest a case of *Mors,* while the authorities of the dry land write their official remarks in a big book.

It was assumed that there was no doubt as to Mr. Throgmorton's identity; and, of course, there was none either.

The question for the probate court was adjourned, and the chief of police informed Mr. Weston, through the interpreter, that his deputy would present himself and register the property found on the body. There were only a few articles, but a considerable sum of money, and this necessitated the action of the court.

After a light lunch at the coast-guard's, they separated, and Mr. Weston was left to bury his friend.

The chief of police took charge of the cash found on the deceased, after deducting 200 crowns for funeral expenses; it amounted to about 1200 crowns in Danish money.

Mr. Weston, in his ignorance, could only be polite to the authorities; he could neither say nor do anything.

After dinner he went to see Nielsen, and poured out the tale of his hardships.

"You see, Mr. Nielsen," he said, "Throgmorton was our financier. The money really belonged to Mrs. Weston, but as he was the most business-like of us, we left all money matters to him. We have only a few Danish notes besides the money for the funeral. What are we to do?"

"You had better wait and mention it to the probate court. Then we shall see what the registrar will say. The best way would be to get confirmation of it from England. I don't think the registrar can act on his own responsibility."

Mr. Weston shook his head.

"This is a desperate affair for Mrs. Weston and me. We can't even get home."

Nielsen took out his pocket-book.

"Mr. Weston," said he, "I am willing to let you have what you want. I understand very well that you are in an awkward situation. I have offered to assist you, and I shall keep my word."

Weston considered.

"It's too much," said he; "I am quite a stranger to you."

"I look upon you as a gentleman, Mr. Weston, and your word is enough for me. As I say, I am at your disposal. As a matter of form, I shall ask you just for a receipt for the amount. And as I said before, I will assist you with what you want."

Weston was perceptibily embarrassed.

Nielsen was still standing with his pocket-book in his hand.

Weston looked up rather shyly—"Would fifty pounds be asking too much?" he said. "Mrs. Weston——"

"It's a good lot," thought Nielsen, but he did not betray himself.

"Not at all—I understand quite that with a lady—— But you must give me a couple of days, as I haven't that amount with me."

"Less might perhaps——"

"Not at all," Nielsen repeated. "You won't be able to do with less, I understand very well. But to cover any contingency, I shall have to ask you to give me a formal power of attorney to represent you at the probate court. From what I understand, Mrs. Weston, your wife, is the deceased's sole heiress. The sum will therefore come to you, or to her, if she has a separate estate. All you have to do is to get legitimation from England, and the affair will be in order. That can be done in the course of a few days, can it not?"

Nielsen looked at Weston.

It was evident that the thing would not go so smoothly. Nielsen was not very well satisfied. Fifty pounds is 900 crowns in Danish money, and that was a good deal to put into the Englishman. For, if Nielsen and the Doctor were right in their hypotheses, he ought to use the opportunity to disappear and find another place to hide in. Besides, he must be kept at Lökken until Miss Derry and Mr. Armstrong arrived. But if they would only hurry themselves, it would not be a bad idea for Nielsen to keep Weston waiting a few days for the sake of the considerable sum of money promised.

Weston seemed to have made up his mind.

"Mr. Nielsen," he said, "you are doing us, Mrs. Weston and myself, a great service. But I must first speak to her about it. You will understand that."

"Of course," said Nielsen.

The weather continued fine and there was a splendid sunset with a background of gold to the glowing disk.

Nielsen and the Doctor walked up and down the sands and looked at it.

Mrs. Weston came down the gap, where the most notable curiosity of the place, the stinking open drain, spread its perfume in the still air of the summer evening.

She made straight for the two friends.

"I'll go," said the Doctor. "She wants to talk to you. Be as inconsistent as usual, and come to me afterwards."

He turned on his heel in the moist sand and made towards Nybæk.

Mrs. Weston approached Nielsen and greeted him with a friendly and serious air.

"Your friend has gone off—did I drive him away?"

"No," said Nielsen. "He wanted to take an evening walk to Nybæk; but I was rather tired."

"That is fortunate," she said. "Shall we sit down?"

They were standing in front of the Doctor's beach chairs, which were empty.

Mrs Weston sat in one of them; Nielsen took the other. The chairs were turned towards the beach and the sunset.

"It's lovely here," said Nielsen; "look how calm the sea is—and yesterday——"

Mrs. Weston declined to follow this up.

"I want to talk to you about business," she said. "You are a lawyer, and you have been of great assistance to me during the last few days, more than you think. It may seem strange that I should come to you—but you are a lawyer. Will you be *my* solicitor?"

Nielsen bowed.

She went on. "*Mine,* I say. You have been talking to Mr. Weston. He has told me of your handsome offer. I thank you for it, if you were thinking of me. I am in a difficulty. Mr. Throgmorton's death has placed me in a more difficult position than you can imagine. It may seem strange that I should apply to you. You may think it would be more natural—but no matter. Will *you* be my lawyer?"

"With pleasure, Mrs. Weston. Only I beg you to remember that I am a stranger. If I am to be of real use to you, it will be necessary to confide in me. Without your confidence I cannot protect your interests, and I am accustomed to do thoroughly whatever I undertake. I must ask for full information about you, about the deceased, about Mr. Weston—about everything, in short. Have you considered that, Mrs. Weston?"

Mrs. Weston raised her beautiful dark eyes and looked at Nielsen with a melancholy smile.

"I have considered *everything*," she said.

"Very well," he answered. "Then I am ready."

"You mustn't let Mr. Weston have fifty pounds," she said, in some embarrassment, but with strong emphasis. "By doing so you would only cause trouble to me, and to yourself. You would never see the money again."

"Ah," was Nielsen's remark.

She blushed. "It may sound strange, but it is true. Mr. Weston would leave here and would never come back. He is not a bad man, he has his good points, many, I may say. But he is a weak character. There is no curing that."

"Mr. Weston is your husband?" Nielsen held his breath.

"Yes," she said.

Nielsen tried to look her in the face, but she avoided his eyes.

He did not believe her.

"Good," said he. "Before I consider your astonishing communication, I must inquire whether there is community of property between you and Mr. Wetson."

"No," said Mrs. Weston. "There is a marriage settlement, according to which our little fortune is mine. Mr. Weston cannot dispose of it."

"And your lawyer in London?" asked Nielsen. He said London involuntarily.

"Mr. Sydney Armstrong—an agent in South Kensington—manages my affairs."

"Ah," said Nielsen. It did not surprise him. "Then the best thing will be to telegraph to him that your brother has lost his life."

Mrs. Weston shook her head. "If that was all, I should not need you, Mr. Nielsen."

No doubt there was something in that. Nielsen already regretted his letter to Miss Derry. He asked cautiously:

"What am I to do, then?"

"You must contrive to keep Mr. Weston here and lend me a small sum—much less than fifty pounds—to get home with."

"And then?"

"Then you must represent me before the authorities here. As soon as I get home, I shall send you the money and the necessary papers. Will you do that?"

"Of course," said Nielsen. "Only I must know about your relation to the deceased and about the home, of which you speak. It would be the most natural thing for you to apply to Mr. Armstrong, and if you do not do so, you must have weighty reasons; and these reasons I must know."

"Then you don't trust me," she said sadly.

"Indeed, you're mistaken—but I must be able to justify my position before the authorities and before Mr. Armstrong. If you have reasons for going past that gentleman, I shall, of course, respect them, but I must have sufficient reasons. We lawyers, that is, the honorable ones among us, are a great fraternity, and we do not go behind one another's backs. Therefore, dear madam, however inconvenient it may be to you,

you must tell me why you will not take the most direct course."

"I do not trust Mr. Armstrong. He was my brother's man of business; my brother had great faults—unhappily nothing but faults. Mr. Armstrong allowed my brother to make use of him, and although I do not believe he is dishonest in himself, I have no confidence in him. Absolutely none. That is my reason."

"But you have some family at home?"

"No," she answered. "My father was a doctor in the Colonies; he is dead; my mother died when I was a child. I have no relations in England—none at all."

Nielsen looked at her with compassion. Her great dark eyes rested on him beseechingly; they were moist. Nielsen thought of Dr. Koldby. No, he would find out how things were.

"You spoke about your home—or didn't I understand you rightly?" he continued, mercilessly.

The sun had just disappeared below the horizon.

"Shall we walk a little?" she said, with a movement as though she felt cold.

Nielsen got up.

At the same moment he caught sight of the tall Englishman up the gap. Mrs. Weston saw him, too.

“Come,” she said, “this way.”

So they turned towards Nybæk. They walked in silence for a few moments, then Nielsen repeated his question.

“You spoke of a home——”

“Yes,” she said; “I have a house in London; it is let at present, but it is mine. Mr. Armstrong looks after it. He managed it for my—brother.”

Nielsen thought she hesitated in saying “brother.” It struck him that she seldom spoke of her brother directly. Her words about him just now were cold and sharp.

“Where is that house situated?” asked Nielsen.

“In South Kensington—well, you don’t know London, so it is no use mentioning the street.”

Nielsen knew where it was. He could not avoid knowing who had taken the house. She called it her house. Mr. Armstrong called it Major Johnson’s house. If she went to London now, she must find out, and then——. Nielsen felt that then it would be all over. His first impulse was to tell her that he was her tenant. But——

The Doctor came towards them.

“ Mr. Nielsen,” she asked him hurriedly, “ have you full confidence in your friend? ”

“ Absolute,” answered Nielsen.

“ Do you tell him everything? ”

“ As a rule.”

“ Will you tell him what I have asked you to do? ”

“ That depends upon you.”

She stopped; then said: “ You may tell him.”

Nielsen smiled.

“ What you have confided to me, might be told to anyone. We both have eyes, and your relation to Mr. Weston has been quite apparent to us. That you and your brother were not on affectionate terms we have both remarked. In short, Mrs. Weston, I have not your confidence. Nevertheless, I shall do what you have asked me—to-morrow.”

“ And if he dissuades you? ”

“ He will not do that. Dr. Koldby is a sensible man, and he admires you. I am to put off Mr. Weston, then? ”

She nodded.

The Doctor then came up to them.

"Good-evening," he said.

They all went home together. Mr. Weston stood in the hotel doorway and followed Nielsen with his gaze.

And, as Nielsen expected, he came after him and said he hoped Mrs. Weston agreed with him. Nielsen hoped so, too; he would write the same evening for the money.

Thereupon Mr. Weston went to his room reassured.

CHAPTER IX

"Well, Nielsen," said the Doctor, late that night, as they were smoking their last cigar; "did you hold your own?"

"Nearly," answered Nielsen.

"When a man says that he nearly held his own, it means that he gave in. That's an infallible rule. So it was she who came off the winner?"

"Perhaps," replied Nielsen; he was not quite willing to admit it. "In any case, she was cheaper than Mr. Weston. She warned me against lending him money. It sounded very honest. She wants to get rid of him, that's plain."

"Come on with your report," said the Doctor briefly.

Nielsen recounted all that had passed.

"Hum," said the Doctor, when he had heard it—walking up and down and muttering to himself. "So you haven't yet done anything foolish. You have looked rather deeply into the pretty lady's eyes, I can tell that from the coloring of your account. You have a right to do that. But she has told you lies, and that she has no right to do, nor have you a right to let yourself be fooled."

Nielsen said nothing. The Doctor went on:

"I pass over that about her father and mother who are dead. Those loved ones are no business of ours. *Requiescant in pace.* Armstrong we know; he is no doubt a blackguard. In parenthesis, I congratulate you on not betraying your acquaintance with him. It would have been real Danish to have burst out with, 'Bless me! I know that man.' You have one cosmopolitan talent, you can hold your tongue. And you were quite right not to know Cranbourne Grove, but as you say, she will find that out if she gets the papers from Armstrong."

"I can't see what right you have to accuse her of lying."

The Doctor laughed. "Ho, ho! there spoke the victim of Cupid. Lay aside, for a moment, your overkindly feelings for the lady, and tell me honestly what she said to you. As you say yourself, nothing. She insisted that Throgmorton was her brother, which I take the liberty of doubting. A brother and sister who are on such terms as they were, do not go about together. I believe the so-called Mr. Throgmorton was Mr. Weston. That idea occurred to me out at Nybæk, where one can sometimes hit upon a good idea. Your account nails it fast with a tenpenny nail. The lanky Englishman, who is now to be cast off, is Major Johnson. That we know. So she has lied, the serpent, hasn't she?"

"You have no right to say that," was the answer. "We have made it our invariable rule not to jump at conclusions; and that is what you are doing."

"No, my friend, I'm not; but you won't see. If the lanky one were Mr. Weston, the two would either separate or live as man and wife. She would not leave him to you and run away herself—for that is what she is going to do. She has not a scrap of liking for him. I won't presume to suggest that she will not send you the money. She will do that, perhaps. Though ladies have been known to be forgetful in matters of that kind, too. But, never mind, perhaps she will, we say. But you will never see *her* again. The house is hers. She will go straight to that thief Armstrong and discover that you and I are her tenants; she will be suspicious, realize, and vanish to the Colonies. Pop goes the weasel! And then she is out of our world. In the meantime Miss Derry will come alone—Mr. Armstrong is much too clever to let himself be tempted over here. She has probably already telegraphed to him. And then we shall be left with the lanky Englishman and Amy No. 1. Only the cat will be wanting to make the party complete. What?"

The Doctor sat down, puffing like a steam-engine. Nielsen was quite in good spirits.

"It's not like you to break into a gallop, my dear Doctor. If Mrs. Weston had any intention of doing what you so chivalrously suggest, why in the world should she give herself the trouble of talking to me?"

The Doctor laughed sarcastically. "Giving you her confidence, you ought to have said. For that is what you are trying to imagine she did. I am convinced that she even went so far as to give you permission to include me in that confidence."

Nielsen was confused.

"There, you see," the Doctor continued. "She did so, of course. Let me thank you for the confidence shown me. Now it's your turn."

Nielsen thought for a moment; then he said sulkily: " So you think she really said all this to me to prevent my lending that lout the fifty pounds? "

" Something like that." The Doctor looked sideways at Nielsen and laughed good-naturedly. " I'm sorry for you, my boy, but that's what I think. Anyhow, you'll save the difference between what she is gracious enough to be satisfied with and the fifty pounds he was impudent enough to ask for. But as soon as she's gone, he'll be off, too. What then? "

" So you think I ought not to let her have the money? "

" It depends on what you want. If you have given up trying to get to the bottom of the affair, then you ought on your side to give her your confidence in return for hers. You ought to introduce yourself as the tenant of No. 48 Cranbourne Grove, South Kensington, London, S. W., and declare yourself satisfied with the house with the exception of the cellar under the dining-room, where we found Amy's cat. You may remark in passing that Madam Sivertsen has taken charge of the cat, but knows nothing of the quiet lodger in the cellar. Either she won't understand you, or she'll look in the cellar herself. Then it'll be she who will take the matter up, which is only reasonable, as she says the house is hers. Or, on the other hand, she *will* understand you, and then she'll have a fit, and you can call me in, if you can't manage her yourself. What do you say to that?"

Nielsen answered quickly:

"That it is not well thought out, my good Doctor. In the first case both you and I would be properly in the cart. And——"

"Shall we leave the first case out of the question? She knows, anyhow, who that quiet lodger is. We don't even know that. She has no reason for concealing his identity, if she is innocent. If she is an accomplice——"

Nielsen interrupted sharply.

"Do you think *she* is a murderess?"

"*She*," repeated the Doctor; "with a big line under it, what? No, in your eyes she's an angel, isn't she? In mine she is a query—an *x*, if you like. I stick to Miss Derry. Of the two Amys I am more inclined to the one with the cat's collar. You seem to fancy the one with the cat. For Amy's cat belongs to Amy No. 2, doesn't it? Well, that doesn't matter. Go with her to London, or rather, offer to do so. Then if she really wants to have your help, she will accept. If she says no, then you know where you have her. That's my opinion."

"Why didn't you say that at once, Doctor? There's sense in that."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"It's only in comedies and bad novels that they say the right thing at once. In comedies, it is a simple result of the necessities of the stage; in bad novels, it is because they are bad. Forgive me this digression. But the idea occurred to me while we were talking. I don't boast, but isn't it rather neat?"

"Excellent," said Nielsen.

"I'm so glad we're agreed. So now you will offer her your company, and then you will have the pleasure of gazing deeply into the pretty eyes, while I shall have the somewhat doubtful amusement of keeping an eye on Mr. Weston. I'm hanged if it will be fun for me. But I shall do it conscientiously. Only I want to know how you stand now with regard to the *case*—our case."

"As before," said Nielsen shortly.

"That means that I am to expect Miss Derry and perhaps Mr. Armstrong. But just to see where we are, I should like to have a few words about your view of the case. It changes, you know, just as mine does, and it would be useful to know what we believe in now."

"To speak frankly, Doctor," said Nielsen, "I am at a loss."

"So am I—but let me hear the latest new version."

Nielsen lighted another cigarette and walked up and down the room. He had to collect his ideas.

The Doctor was sitting astride his chair, as on a high horse.

"Let's hear, Mr. Lawyer!"

Nielsen hesitated. "To tell you the truth, Doctor, I don't think my theories are worth much, but if you want them, here they are. Mrs. Weston is Mrs. Weston."

"You believe in her," interrupted the Doctor with a smile.

"Yes," said Nielsen, "*still!* The so-called Mr. Weston is probably Major Johnson. You believe that too. Who the murdered man is, I don't know. I think now that it is Mr. Throgmorton, Mrs. Weston's brother, if Mr. Throgmorton *is*

Mrs. Weston's brother. Finally, I believe the drowned Englishman is Mr. Weston."

"If Mrs. Weston is his wife," interrupted the Doctor.

"Of course, but we started with that assumption."

"*You* did."

"Confound it, one must start from *some* assumption."

"All right. But then what about Amy No. 1, Miss Derry? Do you believe that she's in love with the lanky idiot and will have him in spite of all his follies and his evident infatuation for Mrs. Weston, who doesn't care a straw for him?"

"Yes," answered Nielsen, "I believe that."

"And the cat?"

"That is symbolical," said Nielsen, with a slight smile. "The collar which once decorated the neck of Amy No. 1's cat has been transferred by the faithless Major to the cat of Amy No. 2, the house cat at 48 Cranbourne Grove. Amy No. 1 will not give up her claim to the collar nor to the deceitful Major. She will turn up now and take possession of him."

"In other words, we know the whole story," laughed the Doctor. "It's not so interesting when we've got all the characters in the piece into their right places and solved the riddle."

"On the contrary, now it begins to be earnest," said Nielsen. "We know that Throgmorton is murdered, but we know neither by whom nor why he was murdered."

"Don't you think it would be more reasonable to suppose that the Major, blinded by his love for Mrs. Weston, has murdered Mr. Weston, and that her scoundrel of a brother has used this—or—why not? that the scoundrel of a brother has murdered his brother-in-law to get his sister and the Major into his power?"

Nielsen made a gesture of impatience. "We have been there before, my friend. So we have made no progress, after all."

"That's just what we have done, Your Sharpsightedness. But now I'm going to bed. I sometimes get useful ideas between the blankets. But it's settled, then, you will go with Mrs. Weston to London?"

"If she will have me, yes."

"And if she won't?"

"Well, then I don't see any other course except a brutal change of tactics."

"As I proposed before."

"Yes, as you proposed before."

"You mean, tell her all we know?"

"Not quite that, but enough to let her see we are in earnest."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"My dear Nielsen, this is going round in a circle. But now, hang me, if I won't go to sleep. For if we go on like this, it will end by being *we* that killed him, the unknown, and then we shall both be criminals. I don't want that."

"Nor I," laughed Nielsen. "Good-night!"

With that they parted.

CHAPTER X

NEXT morning Mr. Weston appeared and asked Nielsen whether he had decided. Nielsen replied that he had. As he had told Mr. Weston the previous evening, he was writing by the next post to his bank to make the necessary arrangements for supplying Mr. Weston with fifty pounds.

Mr. Weston seemed much relieved and walked off towards the south, presumably to make his plans.

Nielsen, on the other hand, sent to ask Mrs. Weston whether she would take a walk in the opposite direction.

And they set off together towards the north.

They crossed Fureby Beck, which glides between grassy banks past the mill and out among the sand-dunes, tranquil and slow in summer amid the white sand of the beach. Then they climbed the bluff and sought a convenient place on Fureby down, whence they would have a view over the blue bay and inland over the level landscape, with its many farms and churches, up to Börglum Abbey, which lies proud and stern on the top of its hill.

"Mrs. Weston," he said; "I have been talking to my friend, and we have gone very thoroughly into the matter you mentioned to me yesterday. I have not your confidence; I asked you for it; and if I am to be of any help to you, it is necessary that you should trust me. Let me, therefore, before we go any further, put a few questions to you. First: You wish to separate from Mr. Weston?"

She made no answer, but bowed her head, as though in affirmation.

"Good," said Nielsen. "That is the first point. You wish me to be cognizant of this; I don't ask you for your reasons. According to my view, a wife has the right to leave her husband whenever she wishes, and as your marriage, as far as I understand, is childless, the matter is free from complication. Does Mr. Weston know of this?"

"No," said Mrs. Weston. "But he shall learn it when it becomes necessary."

"My next question," said Nielsen, "is this: Are you entirely independent of your husband in a financial sense?"

“Entirely,” was the brief answer.

“And you are your brother’s sole heiress?”

“As far as I know—yes. But there is not likely to be anything to inherit.”

Nielsen pricked up his ears.

She continued hurriedly: “My brother certainly has debts that far exceed the money he has left here, and even what he possessed altogether—if indeed he possessed anything.”

“You are not sure about that?” asked Nielsen.

“I did not concern myself to have my brother’s confidence,” she said shortly. “My brother was not a good man. He is dead now.”

Nielsen was silent for a moment; then he said:

“So it was a piece of fraud on Mr. Weston’s part to try to borrow money of me on the pretence that you were the heiress and he inherited through you. I understand now why you warned me, and I thank you for it. I am sorry to hear that an Englishman can behave in such an ungentlemanly way. It would be advisable to warn Mr. Weston not to let any statements of that kind come to the ears of the court. The Danish authorities do not understand joking in such matters, and Mr. Weston would run the risk of serious unpleasantness."

Mrs. Weston looked up in some alarm.

"You don't quite understand me, Mr. Nielsen. I mean, Mr. Weston is not altogether in the wrong. He is really entitled to a part of this money—you understand, he is a sort of creditor. My brother owed him money."

"Ah," said Nielsen.

Mrs. Weston was a little confused.

Nielsen asked—in a rather sharper tone than before:

"Does that mean that Mr. Weston has a fortune?"

"Yes," she said.

"Then why doesn't he write to England for money?"

She hesitated for a moment.

Then she said:

"Mr. Weston has been unwise enough to join my late brother in transactions which are not quite—what shall I say?—not quite worthy of a gentleman. He gave my brother a power of attorney, and everything that was sent him from England passed through my brother's hands. Now perhaps you will understand why Mr. Armstrong, who was my brother's man of business, will not be the right man for me, when I want legal advice."

Nielsen understood.

"But," said he, "the *house*"—in Cranbourne Grove, he was on the point of saying, but checked himself in time—"the house you mentioned yesterday, and which you told me belonged to you?"

"The house," she replied, "is just what makes it necessary for me to go to London. It belonged to an aunt of ours; she died last year, and left it to me and my brother jointly. Mr. Weston wished to acquire it, but Mr. Armstrong is the only person who knows how far that business has gone. Mr. Weston claims that it is his; my brother managed it through Mr. Armstrong, and it is let to two foreign gentlemen. We lived there for a short time, indeed it was from there that we came here, because it—because Mr. Weston did not wish to live in London—for the present. This house has been the cause of a great deal of trouble between us—but you will spare me, I'm sure, the discussion of these matters, which only distress me."

She looked beseechingly at him.

Nielsen would really have liked to hear a little more about the house, as was scarcely surprising. He also wanted to hear Major Johnson's name mentioned. But he had to admit that everything she had said tended to confirm his and the Doctor's suppositions. Major Johnson had money, but was in the clutches of Throgmorton. Mrs. Weston wanted to escape from it all, and what she meant by the trouble the house had caused Nielsen understood remarkably well.

He formed a resolution.

"Mrs. Weston," he said. "I am willing to help you on one condition. We will go together to London."

"As you wish," she said, holding out her hand.

Nielsen was taken by surprise.

She smiled.

"I trust implicitly in you; you are the only person in the whole world I have confidence in, and I shall gladly follow you wherever you wish."

That was saying a good deal.

Nielsen imagined he could see the Doctor's skeptical head rise among the sand-dunes behind her. The blood rushed into his cheeks.

Mrs. Weston looked at him with a beautiful smile—a friendly smile, perhaps even an affectionate smile.

Nielsen pulled himself together.

He must mind what he was about—but Holger Nielsen, the self-appointed avenger of Justice, the criminalist and pioneer of new ideas, was in love.

He was in love, but for that very reason he would not shrink from the danger. He would defy it like a Viking of the old days.

Thus the men of progress return constantly to the ways of their primitive ancestors.

He took her hand and kissed it.

"Mrs. Weston," he said in a low voice. "Thank you for your confidence. Then we will go together, and whatever happens, be assured that I shall act for you and show myself worthy of that trust which I am proud to have won."

She gave him a warm and lingering look.

With a shade of triumph in it—thought Nielsen. His self-esteem interpreted the look otherwise than Dr. Koldby would have done.

But there was no more to be said; the matter was settled as they had agreed.

CHAPTER XI

THAT evening, when the two friends came together again, Dr. Koldby held forth. He was in an eloquent vein, and he made a warm speech, with a great deal of dignity and much knowledge of human nature in it.

" Nielsen," he said, " let me give you my diagnosis. You are in love with Mrs. Weston; I have been expecting that for some time, and it is a normal case. You are going to London with her to assist her. I say nothing to that; I am all the more inclined to approve of it, as sooner or later you will win her confidence, and therein lies undoubtedly the solution of the whole riddle. So far, what has happened is the best that could happen. Either you will discover all and become an accomplice in a moral and judicial sense—and then you will request me to stop my investigations, which, as you know, I shall be ready enough to do at any moment. The man in the cellar does not interest me very much personally, and he interests justice even less. For you believe in a sort of justice different from that generally practiced; I go a bit further, I don't believe in any justice at all. As far as I'm concerned, you may go and murder a real live Councilor of State—and if this doctrine were turned against myself, I should look upon it as a sort of refinement of punishment. But you must promise me one thing: to tell me the story. I am inquisitive, you know, since I, like other men, am born of woman.

" So that is the first alternative.

" We now come to the other. She accompanies you. She wants a man to get her out of her scrape; for she herself admits that she is in a scrape. She is pretty, that her mirror and a good many men have told her; she knows it. She has made her diagnosis, too, for in these cases women diagnose to a nicety. ' It shall be *he,*' she says—and adds: ' I've got him.' For the present you are useful to her plans. Let us hope she will give you something in return; men are easily satisfied, especially when they are in love. Now look out. Don't let yourself be taken in, my boy, don't let yourself be cheated out of the only advantage you will get in this case. You must promise me, whether the love affair prospers or not, don't for anything let her do you out of the story. I'm not going to preach morality; you may behave as madly as you like, that's your affair—but I will not be done out of the story of Cranbourne Grove. Understand that."

Nielsen laughed.

"You don't believe in her."

"I don't believe in any female on this earth. All this story is symbolized by the cat, remember that. Let this lady put a collar round your neck, a little chain with 'Amy's Puss' on it, *à la bonheur*—there are men who like that sort of thing. But the solid result I'm going to have, namely, to be able to put on record the story of Amy's cat, of all Amy's cats, and of the cats of all the Amys. I ask nothing more. Give me your instructions before you go, and I shall act as you wish; now it becomes entirely *your* case. So go and meet your fate like the foolhardy person you are."

"Very well," said Nielsen. "You are a sensible man, Dr. Koldby; you don't preach, you don't moralize, and you are ready to help. Listen then: Mr. Weston—we will continue to call him so until he is identified—I leave to you. You answer to me for him. He is under suspicion on account of his name; because he gives himself out for Amy's husband without being so, because he follows Mrs. Weston against her will; in short, for many reasons. Hold him fast. When Amy Derry arrives, she will deal with him; and whether you are then to set him free or not, depends upon what I find out in London. I have resolved to be firm,—you laugh,—but I have a will. If *she* is what I believe and hope, then my place is by her side."

"Justice takes a back seat," remarked the Doctor.

"When Love and Justice meet hand to hand, Doctor, then I'm for Love."

"That's a nasty, cheap, melodramatic phrase, Nielsen; but like all such tags it contains a grain of truth, and it proves that our forefathers were right. For we men are burnt out; let us say, by about seventy we are no longer useful to society. The few of us who are not inflammable, as, for instance, your humble servant, are so because the whole thing is so completely indifferent to us. But now I've got my orders. You go away and meet your fate, but take care you don't cheat me out of the solution, or I shall give you notice to terminate our friendship."

"You can trust me," said Nielsen kindly.

"The devil I can. When a man goes and falls in love, he gets so much of the woman's nature into him that friendship is in danger. The ancient friendship, *amicitia,*—see Cicero and Seneca,—was only possible between *pure* men. Let us leave these melancholy subjects and go to bed. For early to-morrow morning you and the lady begin your flight. The post wagon goes at half-past five. I shall do my best to preserve your good name in respectable Lökken."

"Yes," said Nielsen, "but above all, look after Weston. We must be clear of him, until the prodigy has happened."

There they were both agreed—all three, in fact.

BOOK III

AMY'S CAT

BOOK III

AMY'S CAT

CHAPTER I

Lökken, July 4, 19—.

Dear Friend and Comrade in Arms:

According to my promise—and I have made it my habit always to keep my promises—I am going to give you a conscientious report of all that happened in the loyal town of Lökken when it became apparent that you had vanished with Mrs. Weston. This did not take long to become apparent, as that ass, the cloth merchant from Randers, treated me to the news at breakfast. I let him think it surprised me, and came off fairly well. I declared myself ready to prepare Mr. Weston as considerately as possible for the news of the blow that had fallen upon his house. Hear now how I did it. I went to him and informed him that you had gone to Hjörring to make arrangements, and that you had asked me to tell him this and to add, what you had forgotten to say to him, that it would be best, in view of a possible visit from the probate court, that he should make an excursion to Rubjerg Cliff. He wanted to speak to his wife, but I made it clear to him that it would be better for her not to know anything about it, so that she might be quite ignorant, in case the authorities should arrive while he was away.

N. B.—Mr. Weston is preposterously idiotic.

Therefore it came off. We started, followed by the gaze of all the people in the hotel; they evidently believed we were on the track of the fugitives. We hired a carriage at the maltster's and jogged along the awful road to the Cliff. It was a sore trial, but as I felt the whole time that while we were driving northwards you and Amy No. 2 were making your way with equal speed in the opposite direction, I succeeded for the first time in my life in enjoying a drive at snail's pace. We reached the Cliff without any event of importance. The brute was sulky and silent. Then we ate some lunch we had brought with us and drank an excellent red wine—you know it, the wine I found at the local dealer's the other day. We lit our cigars, and then I began: "Mr. Weston," said I, "allow me to make a confession. Your wife has run away with my friend."

You know what a Jack-in-the-box is like—well, that is just how Mr. Weston behaved; he jumped a yard into the air.

I asked him to keep his seat; you had taken the first train and must be at Aarhus now, would soon be at Esbjerg, and then on board and away.

Then I let him blackguard me for five minutes, and must admit that the English language possesses a rich store of invective, which might be of considerable effect on a man with a less clear conscience than mine. When he seemed to have exhausted the *repertoire,* I rose to reply. I cannot give my speech word for word, but shall try to report it as well as I can.

"Sir," said I, "now you have finished, and now I am going to begin. Of course, it is out of the question to follow the fugitives; you will not catch them in Denmark. You have no money to pay your hotel bill, you won't get any from me, and you will be arrested if you try to clear out. We are expecting the people from the probate court, and they will require your presence. So you can abuse me as much as you like, but you won't do any good by it. You are the one that's in a hole. For the present, you must leave your wife out of the reckoning; she has gone to

London to arrange *her* affairs; she wouldn't have you with her, and Nielsen offered to escort her, much against her will. Nielsen is a man of honor, and your wife is in good hands. Here, I must tell you, there is no question of an elopement or anything of that sort."

(May I remark in parenthesis, that I said that because at present I can answer for it; but let me add, that I don't advise you to give the lie to my words!)

But to return to Mr. Weston: "Sir," said I—I said "Sir" once more, "you are my prisoner. Until Mrs. Weston comes back I hold you as a hostage. I shall see about your board, tell lies to the other visitors, in short, be of service to you in every way, but you must stay here. In a few days Nielsen will be back, and then you will be free."

Evidently he did not understand this at all. He boiled up again and talked about a great nation and so on, as the idiots always do, who are units among more millions than we are. He threatened me with the British consul. I listened to him and said I should be happy to go with him to the British consul.

"You treat me as a criminal," said he.

To this I answered that, as prisoners generally belonged to that accidental variety of our fellow citizens, he was quite at liberty to hold that opinion. I had grounds for supposing that he was sailing under false colors. If he preferred to be in official custody instead of mine, I should be happy to give way to the police.

The police were evidently not at all to his liking; he collapsed, and asked in a feeble tone by what right I treated him thus?

To which I replied: "Without the slightest right."

I thought that was the most honest thing to say.

He began to bluster again.

I took him down. "My friend and I," I said, "have long entertained a certain vague suspicion of you; this is due to your hesitation with regard to the authorities, and other things. When Mrs. Weston or Nielsen returns from London, you will be free. We have nothing to do with the police, and I can assure you that as soon as Nielsen has finished his business with your wife, you will be at liberty. A letter from him will be sufficient. On the other hand, until he writes, you are a prisoner."

"Do you acknowledge that this is illegal?" he asked—he had now become fairly calm.

"Yes," I answered, "it is illegal if it is done against your will. But you will admit that you haven't a penny in your pocket; your wife asserts that the money left by the deceased belongs to her, as part of her separate estate. So that you cannot get away."

"The money is mine," he said.

"Prove it to the probate court," said I.

"I shall do so," said he.

"Very well," said I, "let us go to Hjörring together."

But he wouldn't do that.

In short, the end of it was that he—a great ass, as I said before—became manageable, especially as I treated him very kindly and good-humoredly—as you know I can. He assured me that he was a gentleman, which I assured him I believed. I said I did not suspect him of anything, but I was obliged to act as I did. Finally, we really became good friends; I promised to help him out of his difficulties. Let me remark that he does not seem inconsolable over his wife's running away; he evidently does not believe she will come back. Only he would like to go to London.

The deuce he would! So would I in his case.

That's all. Note that I have not hinted a doubt that he is Mr. Weston, and that I haven't mentioned Cranbourne Grove or the cat. Do as I have done, and try first of all how far you can go without betraying your knowledge. And for goodness' sake, look after your little heart, Nielsen. For to tell you the truth, it is from that quarter that I'm afraid of follies. Do as I do: say to yourself that, next to professors of the fine arts, women are the most harmful of all creatures on earth. For that is what they are.

Hold your own, young man.

Your friend,
JENS KOLDBY.

P. S.—I am not a woman, but just as I was going to post this letter I got a telegram from London. It contains only three words: 'Left London to-day, Amy D.'—Hence this postscript. Now I have got to hold Mr. Weston tight.

J. K.

CHAPTER II

London, July 7, 19—.

Dear Doctor:

I have received your letter and make haste to reply to it. The journey was accomplished successfully. Mrs. Weston is an agreeable traveling companion; I am convinced she would say the same of me. I have made it my rule not to try to press her—yet. It was settled that we should go together to London, and I am to accompany her to Mr. Armstrong's. She is staying at the Grosvenor Hotel, Victoria Station. I shall stay there, too. I have advised Madam Sivertsen of my coming to London, and asked her to keep my letters. But for the present I don't want to let Mrs. Weston go out of my sight, and I have hold of the purse, which is a useful means of securing her. It is a curious situation, but we have found ourselves in a series of curious situations. I have given up making definite plans and trying to extend our view of the affair. However, it can scarcely be avoided that Mrs. Weston and I visit the house in Cranbourne Grove together, and as far as I can see, I shall have to speak. I have no doubt the murdered man was her husband, in spite of your ingenious hypothesis about Throgmorton, which indeed led me astray for a time. As to Major Johnson, neither you nor I are in any doubt. From Esbjerg I sent a few words to Miss Derry, addressed to the boat at Parkeston, which she must have received. That you will learn from her. If she is really still infatuated with the Major, you must make the best of it, but, remember, you answer for them both. As to Cranbourne Grove, you must not mention it either to her or the Major. As soon as the mine is sprung over here—and that it will be sprung I have no shadow of doubt—you will have clear and brief instructions from me. I feel convinced that to-morrow will bring some certainty. But you must be prepared to wait three days before you get detailed information. I am not inclined to write anything until I can see things clearly. It would only make you doubtful, and you are a man one can safely leave to act according to his judgment. This letter, therefore, does not tell you much, but you were expecting to hear from me. Write to Cranbourne Grove; I shall get letters there. Telegrams had better be sent to the Grosvenor Hotel. Yours sincerely,

HOLGER NIELSEN.

CHAPTER III

Lökken, July 6, 19—.

Dear Friend and Fellow-investigator:

This is an important document. Amy No. 1 has arrived. Bless the child, she's a darling. She came alone. I did not dare leave my prisoner, though Mr. Weston seems to have accepted the inevitable. The probate court has made no sign at present, but no doubt it will come to-morrow, as there is a sort of sessions to be held here. However, this pales by the side of what I am going to tell you.

Mr. Weston was summoned after lunch. Miss Amy stayed in my room to receive him. He came and was identified as—strange though it may seem—Mr. Weston. I begin by telling you that, because this is a letter, not an exciting novel. Both you and I would have staked our heads that he was Major Johnson—he is Mr. Weston. So she *is* his wife.

You don't believe it. I was inclined to doubt it; but when the door opened and he entered, Miss

Amy got up and held out her hand with a natural and friendly: “How do you do, Mr. Weston?”

I don’t suppose I cut a very sagacious figure, and I renounce the attempt to give a detailed account of what passed; it was not so very amusing either.

The lady came in a carriage from Vraa, as she should; she asked for me, as she should. When we came into my room she told me that she had had your letter and understood that it was necessary she should come. She had seen Mr. Armstrong, who, however, told her that he had received a telegram from Mrs. Weston saying she was coming to London, and therefore had to stay where he was. She had then started alone. She understood, as I said, that she had to come. Now she only wanted to know why she had to come. To this I replied that she would soon see that. Then I sent a message to Mr. Weston, looking forward to seeing the Major exposed. Mr. Weston came, and Amy said: “How do you do, Mr. Weston!”

Well, that’s really all there is to tell you.

He was more sensible than usual; they agreed that they had something to talk about, and I felt not very sure of my position. For the fact is that my part is played out. Miss Derry thanked me for what I had done for her, and virtually gave me to understand that she did not want me any more. Mr. Weston was beastly polite to me. He is slipping out of my hands. And what the devil am I to do? Sitting here and looking like a fool doesn't suit me. It's plain that our guess was utterly wrong. But can you tell me why that blackguard Throgmorton went about with Mr. Weston's letters from this same Amy in his pocket-book?

We must evidently turn our thoughts to the man in the cellar.

Mr. Weston declared that he would appear before the probate court. He is quite sure of himself now, the beast.

And Amy No. 1?

I shall confine myself to reporting facts; to tell you the truth, I'm a little sick of hypotheses, otherwise I might feel inclined to make a good many about Amy No. 1. Is Amy No. 2 any better, I wonder? All the same these good people had better take care; I'll not let go of them.

That's enough for to-day. Send me some instructions. Yours, JENS KOLDBY.

CHAPTER IV

TELEGRAM

LONDON, July 8.

TO DR. JENS KOLDBY, Lökken.

Weston, alias Johnson, must be secured, if necessary with help of police. Miss Derry in collusion with him. NIELSEN.

CHAPTER V

Mr. Armstrong was rather nervous. Nielsen let Mrs. Weston do the talking; he had greeted the agent politely, as a stranger, and not a word had he said to Mrs. Weston about his acquaintance with Armstrong.

And on his side Armstrong had not let fall even so natural a remark as that he knew Nielsen. It was evident that the agent was determined to feel his way and to talk a good deal less than was his wont.

They were all three sitting in the agent's little office in Gloucester Road.

Mrs. Weston spoke:

"This gentleman is a friend I have met in Denmark—Mr. Nielsen; he has promised to help me about the inheritance. As you know from my telegram, my brother has unfortunately lost his life in Denmark, and since he, as you know, held a power of attorney from us, we are now in an embarrassing position. This gentleman knows Mr. Weston, and knows that I have a separate estate and that I wish to act for myself. We therefore ask you, Mr. Armstrong, to explain how things stand. You may speak quite frankly, as though you were speaking to me."

Mr. Armstrong bowed:

"If I understand rightly, this gentleman is a lawyer and well acquainted with your affairs?"

Mrs. Weston spoke very clearly, dwelling on her words:

"Mr. Nielsen knows Mr. Weston and me from Denmark, and only from Denmark; Mr. Nielsen knew my brother, but only slightly. What I ask you to do, is merely to tell Mr. Nielsen and me the position of my late brother's affairs. Nothing more."

Mr. Armstrong threw a sharp look at Nielsen.

Nielsen bent his head without speaking.

"I could have wished that Mr. Weston were also present," said Armstrong, rather doubtfully.

"I do not desire his presence," said Mrs. Weston. "All I desire is full information as to my late brother's affairs."

Mr. Armstrong cleared his throat.

"As you wish, Mrs. Weston. Let us begin with the house in Cranbourne Grove. I may presume that for many reasons it will interest Mr.

Nielsen. As perhaps you are aware, Mr. Nielsen is the tenant of your house in Cranbourne Grove."

Mrs. Weston looked up in surprise. "Mr. Nielsen?"

Nielsen nodded.

"I am the tenant of a house in Cranbourne Grove, No. 48, I and my friend the Doctor, whom you know. If the house you told me about in South Kensington is No. 48 Cranbourne Grove, then I am your tenant, Mrs. Weston."

Mrs. Weston blushed and said with some hesitation:

"It surprises me."

Mr. Armstrong felt firmer ground under his feet.

"It can scarcely surprise Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Nielsen took the house of me, and I told him it belonged to Mr. Weston."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Armstrong; you told me it belonged to Major Johnson. You said Major Johnson had bought it of Mr. Throgmorton, and possibly you mentioned Mrs. Weston's name, or only Mr. Weston's. Do you remember?"

Mr. Armstrong looked sharply at Nielsen.

"You remember, perhaps," he retorted, "that you pressed me closely on the subject of a young lady's—Miss Derry's—application to you; you remember, perhaps, that I gave you Major Johnson's address, that I told you the Major was probably staying with Mr. Throgmorton. You also remember, perhaps, that you wrote to Miss Derry and asked that lady to go to Denmark with me in connection with the death of Mr. Throgmorton. You will admit in any case that I have reason to be surprised at seeing you here as Mrs. Weston's representative when Mrs. Weston must be aware that I, as her late brother's man of business, have a claim to her confidence."

"Have you finished, Mr. Armstrong?" asked Nielsen pleasantly.

"I wish to know what Mrs. Weston has to say to that," was the agent's peevish answer.

Mrs. Weston raised her handkerchief to her lips with a little nervous gesture. Then she said:

"Keep to the point, Mr. Armstrong. It ought not to surprise you that Mr. Nielsen has not spoken to me of these things, since he has only met my brother, Mr. Weston, and myself in Denmark, and not Major Johnson. I am glad to hear that Mr. Nielsen has my house, and it does not surprise me to learn that my brother, who could not go straight, thought good to instruct you to tell the tenants that the house belonged to Major Johnson. You have been an accomodating agent to my brother, and for that reason I tell you plainly that I do not wish to employ you."

"Is that a challenge, madam?" asked Mr. Armstrong, rather red in the face.

"That is my intention. You can take it as you please. Mr. Nielsen has my confidence. You have not."

"Has Mr. Nielsen your *full* confidence?" asked Mr. Armstrong doubtfully.

"Yes," was the answer.

"Even after you have learned that Mr. Nielsen, without saying anything to you, has requested Miss Derry to go to Denmark?"

"I do not know Miss Derry," said Mrs. Weston; "and I take no interest in that lady. You were speaking of the house in Cranbourne Grove; will you be good enough to continue? You are aware that Miss Throgmorton, my father's sister, left it to *me;* that I gave my brother power to manage it, and that he misused that power. You know that, don't you? You know that

Major Johnson did not purchase the house, but that I respected the agreement you had drawn up, and that I allowed you to manage the house nominally for my brother, so as not to bring legal difficulties upon him. Now he is dead, and now I call upon you to give me your accounts."

"You shall have them," said Mr. Armstrong. "I shall have a statement drawn up; no one shall accuse me of irregular business methods."

"So much the better," said Mrs. Weston. "Then my brother's creditors cannot touch the house?"

"Certainly not."

"Very well; and my bank shares?"

"Are also untouched—of course, with the exception of those your brother hypothecated by means of what you are pleased to call a forged signature."

"Who has those papers?" asked Mrs. Weston.

"Miss Derry has bought them," said Mr. Armstrong hastily.

"Ah!" Mrs. Weston again put her handkerchief to her lips. "You and Miss Derry seem to be good friends. Who is Miss Derry?"

"Mr. Nielsen introduced her to me, madam—he is sure to know her better than I do; your new legal adviser will be able to give you all information about the young lady."

Nielsen nodded.

Mrs. Weston continued calmly:

"Then it is unnecessary to dwell any longer on that. Will you be good enough to have my statement got ready, and Mr. Nielsen will go through it with me. My brother, then, was quite insolvent?"

"You know that, madam—that is, I have here Major Johnson's power of attorney to collect certain amounts for the Major; some amounts have come in, and according to the arrangement they should have been sent to Mr. Throgmorton to his address in Denmark. I have now learned that the Major is not in Denmark, and do not know what steps I am to take with regard to all the matters that concern that gentleman."

"I know nothing about Major Johnson," said Mrs. Weston sharply; "nor do I wish to be mixed up in his affairs. Major Johnson does not concern me. I wish to have a settlement with you. The rest you must arrange with—with the police, or with Mr. Weston."

Mrs. Weston had risen.

"Shall we go, then, Mr. Nielsen?" she said.

Nielsen also rose.

Mr. Armstrong followed them to the door.

"I wish to speak to you, Mr. Nielsen," he said.

"That depends upon Mrs. Weston," said Nielsen decisively. "I am her lawyer and shall act only according to her wishes. Do you wish me to confer with Mr. Armstrong, Mrs. Weston?"

The lady looked at the agent, with a smile. "I am sure Mr. Armstrong will understand why I have no confidence in him; but I have not the slightest reason for deterring others from honoring Mr. Armstrong with their confidence. You must do as you please, Mr. Nielsen. Only I think you ought to talk over with me what we have just heard; and if you agree with me, we ought to go to the house in Cranbourne Grove; as the house is mine and you have taken it, we are both at home there."

Nielsen held the door open for her.

"I may possibly look in on you this afternoon," he said.

"Pray don't put yourself out for me," said the agent.

He had evidently decided to take a high hand, but he had no further chance of making himself disagreeable, since Mrs. Weston and Nielsen left him without more words.

Armstrong was not very well pleased with the visit. Mrs. Weston was nervous, and Nielsen—Nielsen was not without a certain feeling of curiosity.

CHAPTER VI

Madam Sivertsen was not a person easily moved. Her face, as a rule, was without expression—fat and peaceful. She beamed as she opened the garden gate to Nielsen: it was the broad, happy smile of her native land, the smile that seems poetical when you meet it in the guise of national songs, and, in any case, it was honestly meant.

She started a little on seeing the elegant strange lady. But Nielsen smiled and said: "This is my landlady."

"Ah," said Madam Sivertsen, relapsing into apathy. "It is the lady who belongs to the house."

"It is," said Nielsen.

Madam Sivertsen stepped aside, and down the flagged pathway came, with a proud air of proprietorship, and its tail at an angle of forty-five degrees with its body, the domestic animal, the cat.

The national smile appeared again on Madam Sivertsen's broad features.

"Yes, Mr. Nielsen, you may be sure Puss has improved."

Madam Sivertsen turned to the lady and said, with an indulgent air of good-will, in English: "You must know, madam, that this cat really belongs to you; the gentlemen call it 'Amy's Puss'; it was like a hungry ghost when it crawled out from the wall here—it is my fault that 'Amy's Puss' has become so fat and sleek. Eh, Puss?"

Puss purred.

"Puss really owes me her life and liberty. For I must tell you I set her free from the cellar under the dining-room, where she was shut in," said Nielsen in a resolute tone. He stood a little to Mrs. Weston's side and observed her carefully.

Mrs. Weston was deathly pale and trembling.

"Shall we go in?" said Nielsen to her.

Puss graciously stroked her back against the strange lady.

"Mr. Nielsen," said the lady, "I am not very well—I think—I mean, I had better take a cab and go to the hotel—I am really not quite well."

Madam Sivertsen glared at the lady.

Nielsen lightly laid his hand on her arm and said, half in a whisper:

"I insist on your staying here—you understand, I insist."

A flush came over her face; then she turned pale again, but Nielsen almost forced her into the front door. He opened the door of the drawing-room, and she entered mechanically and took a seat in an armchair by the empty fire-place.

Nielsen was standing before her.

She hid her face in her hands and began to weep. Nielsen kept silence.

At last she looked up through her tears, turned her beseeching eyes upon him in despair, and whispered:

"So this was it—you have hunted me like a wild animal—you, Mr. Nielsen, whom I trusted, the only person I trusted in the whole world."

This made, as it were, a tug at Nielsen's heart; he seemed to have a vision of the Doctor's keen face with its sarcastic smile. Had the moment arrived? Was this a confession?

"Mrs. Weston," he said, "I don't understand you.—I have not hunted you like a wild animal. I am ready to help you now as before; but I demand one thing—*frankness!*"

She wept silently, her whole frame shaken by sobs.

"Mrs. Weston," repeated Nielsen, "be frank; whatever has happened, I shall not desert you—but I insist on frankness."

She looked up.

"Later—later—I can't now—let me go home, let me rest; I am only a woman, this is too much for me. If you want to kill me, then kill me—but don't stand there staring at me. I swear to you, I am innocent—I am innocent——"

Nielsen took her hand and looked at her, more warmly than Dr. Koldby would have thought appropriate to the situation.

She stood up and threw her arms round his neck.

"Save me, help me, take me away from this place. I love you—do you hear? I will be with you always, I will always be yours—I love you——"

And Nielsen felt her cheek, wet with tears, against his, felt her burning lips against his own.

Then he took her in his arms and kissed her tears away.

Madam Sivertsen was displeased—very displeased; and she became still more so when Nielsen told her that he wanted Dr. Koldby's room got ready for the strange lady. Madam Sivertsen had been engaged to keep house for two gentlemen!

But she was a person of experience, and knew how to obey orders. And Nielsen was evidently not in the mood to be contradicted.

The same afternoon the "couple" moved into Cranbourne Grove. Madam Sivertsen had to get everything ready for the strange lady.

And she did so—but when twilight fell she made herself comfortable in her cabin and took Puss on her lap.

"Pussy," said she, "now we have got a lady visitor. Now our time is over—our good time is over. Oh, how true it is that we women are the cause of all the trouble there is in the world!"

For Amy's cat was also a lady.

CHAPTER VII

48 Cranbourne Grove, July 15, 19—.

Dear Doctor:

I don't miss you—let me begin by saying that, so that you may be perfectly clear about the present situation. I have met my fate, as you put it, and if you like you may call me Amy's cat. I love Amy, and Amy loves me. The first of these two facts you know already—the second you must take my word for. You were my judge—my intellectual superior, cool and sagacious, as you are. So now I send you a report of the examination of the accused, Amy Weston, made by me; you are to judge of the evidence and declare yourself in agreement with me in the conclusion I have arrived at as examining magistrate. But first I will permit myself a review of the case, so as to give you its bearings; and I beg you to bear in mind these remarks when you settle down to the study of the documents. It has been a very complicated case, and its different stages have given us occasion for many deliberations in common. Circumstances have obliged me to take the final steps *alone;* I have completed the inquiry, and the case now awaits its judicial settlement.

But let us, nevertheless, recapitulate it—as it stands, before the enclosed final examination has cleared it up.

The case has two sides, a theoretical one and a practical. It rests upon a fact. On May 4 we two found in the cellar of 48 Cranbourne Grove the body of a full-grown man; the face was unrecognizable, there were few, or indeed, no means of identifying the body. On the other hand, there was no doubt whatever as to a crime having been committed. I understand the word crime in its technical sense, an illegal action, whereby one or more persons have encroached upon the legal privileges of another in such a way that the community regards itself justified in stepping in and punishing the deed.

The theoretical side, then, is this: Was it our duty, looking upon ourselves simply as human beings, to call in the organized forces of Society, in this case the London police, and place the prosecution of the matter in their hands?

We debated the question and came to the conclusion that the matter did not concern us, and that we were within our rights in leaving it alone.

But at the same time we agreed that the case interested us in its human aspect, and that this was an instance where we could follow up the case from a purely human standpoint, without having recourse to the forces of Society, and could determine by means of our inquiry whether the ordinary conception of crime was applicable here. Thereby we should be able to spare all those who would necessarily be exposed to unpleasantness by the normal prosecution of the case; we could exclude the public, which only does mischief in such matters; we could go straight ahead, without following up all the side paths which the authorities have to take into consideration. Finally, we could stop whenever it became apparent that the conditions for calling in the aid of public justice were fulfilled, or, on the contrary, were absent. We kept in view the possibility that there might not be a crime in the strictest sense of the word.

We have attained our object. As you will see from the documents, the case is now completely cleared up; it is a matter of taste whether you choose to call the deed that has been accomplished a crime or not. The question for you to decide is, whether we shall allow the public authorities to step in, or whether we shall settle the case, as one may say, out of court.

The practical side of the case is different. We found the murdered man, we found the cat, which informed us that it belonged to a certain "Amy." We found two Amys, Amy Derry—Major Johnson's Amy—and Amy Weston—*my* Amy. We tracked out the trio, Weston, Throgmorton, and the Major. We trusted in Miss Derry and kept her outside the case; we kept Mr. Armstrong outside the case, in spite of the suspicion to which his connection with the trio was bound to give rise. We followed up the trio and found the second Amy. Then the powers above mixed themselves up in the affair, stirred up a storm in the North Sea and put Throgmorton out of the game. To be sure, we were not certain of his identity. We looked upon Major Johnson as the murdered man and the other two gentlemen as his murderers. We made a mistake. It was not long before we saw that the man who called himself Mr. Weston must be the Major. He *is* the Major, and Mr. Weston is the murdered man, who lies in the cellar here, covered with lime.

That will cause you no surprise. The murderer's name you will find out from the enclosed. All I want to insist on now is that we have accomplished our task in a practical way. We have established the "crime"—let us call it by the technical name—with unfailing sureness. We have discovered first the murderer and then the murdered man; in this case there is no further riddle, all is cleared. For Soicety, that is, for the police and the courts, there is only one thing to be done, namely, to lay hands on the guilty person.

We have arrived at our result without making any arrest, without the hearing of witnesses, without interfering with anybody, and we have achieved this result in the interval between the 4th of May and the 15th of July—an interval which under the circumstances is very creditable.

If we now compare our theoretical experiences with our practical, we find that by the method we have chosen we have achieved a result which is excellent from the practical point of view. Theoretically the case is less satisfactory. All the circumstances which made us hesitate at the outset are still present—or, in any case, a great part of them. Mistakes and inconvenience caused to the guiltless—that is, to those who had nothing to do with the case—have certainly been avoided, but the main question still remains, and it is this that I will try to formulate in such a way that you may give your judgment in the case. My question to you then is as follows:

Is there any reason which compels us to lay this case before the constituted authorities and demand their judgment upon it?

I put the question clearly, so that it can only be answered by yes or no.

In conclusion I will add: In the course of my investigations and of the events that have occurred while we were following up our clues, I have become, in a legal sense, disqualified. Theoretically this amounts to a defeat for us, as it shows that the individual is, on account of hereditary tendencies and the whole nature of mankind, unfit to represent the forces of Society. There is nothing new in this, but I want to call your attention to the fact. As far as I can see, it is one of the unsolved problems of existence, how the interests of the person—the *ego*—are to be reconciled to those of Society—the *others;* we meet this question in all the relations of life, and

I do not hesitate to declare that, in agreement with the famous philosopher, Leibnitz, I should be disposed to attempt a solution of the question by saying that in every action the *ego* must be the chief consideration. But by laying the question before you for decision, I, in any case, give proof of my honest wish to regard the matter also from an altruistic standpoint. With this introduction I leave you to study the documents, which I have tried to keep as near to reality as possible, so that you may be able to judge the situation quite impartially; I have represented the judge and the accused as they appear, so that the examination is a true picture of what took place.

For the sake of comparison I have kept to the technical form—only the witnesses are wanting; I could not very well call in Madam Sivertsen, and Amy's cat would have been useless as a witness, though she has been a most useful document in the case.

Awaiting your answer, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

HOLGER NIELSEN.

CHAPTER VIII

Transcript of examination held at 48 Cranbourne Grove, South Kensington, in the County of London, in the matter of the finding of the body of an unidentified male person in the cellar of the said house on the 4th of May of the present year.

July 12. The court was constituted at 7.30 o'clock in the evening and was composed of Holger Nielsen as self-appointed magistrate, without witnesses. There appeared, free from restraint or compulsion, Amy Weston, who deposed that she was born on the 1st of March, 18—, in Trinidad, daughter of the late Dr. Charles Throgmorton and his wife, Cecily Jones, also deceased. The parents died while the witness was a child; she received her education from a sister of her mother's in Trinidad. At the age of seventeen she came to London and was received into the house of her father's sister, Miss Jenny Throgmorton, who owned the house in Cranbourne Grove, where the court was held.

She and her brother, John McGregor Throgmorton, three years older than herself, were the only children. The brother had completed his education at the technical college in South Kensington, and received an appointment in the engineering department of the Great Western Railway Company. The deponent describes him as an untrustworthy and dissipated man, who caused her and her aunt continual trouble. Finally he was dismissed from the service of the railway company, and opened an electrical engineering business in Lambeth, in partnership with one James Weston, who had been a schoolfellow of his. Weston, whom the deponent describes as an active and energetic man, who seemed to have good prospects, was a frequent visitor at the house in Cranbourne Grove, as his influence on Throgmorton appeared to be a favorable one. The deponent's aunt was generally considered to be well off, and often gave it to be understood that she intended to leave her property to her niece. It was probably this and the instigation of her brother that caused Weston to show the deponent marked attention; she was then twenty-two, and her aunt led a very quiet life, so that she had little opportunity of meeting people and forming judgments about them. Therefore, when Weston, after an acquaintance of six months or so, proposed to her, she accepted him; not, indeed, because she loved him, but because she felt attracted by him and wished to change her state of life—as she herself expressed it.

Questioned by the magistrate whether she had never felt love for anyone, she answered decidedly in the negative—but added that the magistrate was the first and only man she had ever loved, and that she felt this love would last till the end of her life.

At this point the magistrate adjourned the inquiry for a few minutes.

The evidence having been read over and confirmed, the examination proceeded at 8.30 o'clock.

In answer to the magistrate, the deponent admitted that the first years of her married life might be described as happy in the ordinary sense of the word. Her husband showed her all possible consideration, and her brother behaved well. The business prospered. Then this business, carried on by the two brothers-in-law, suffered a check; they miscalculated the cost of a contract for public work and incurred such severe losses that they were obliged to suspend their operations. They succeeded in avoiding bankruptcy, but from this time forward they had to struggle with such serious difficulties that they used frequently to hint at the desirability of her aunt's death. They threw themselves into all kinds of indefensible speculations, which sometimes brought in a profit and sometimes a loss; and Weston's conduct became marked by the same irregularities as Throgmorton's. The relations between husband and wife became cool, and there frequently occurred between them scenes that threatened serious friction.

This ended in the deponent leaving her home in the autumn of 19—, and going to stay with her aunt, who was seriously ill and needed her care. About this time Weston and Throgmorton made the acquaintance of Major James Johnson of the 27th Lancers, who was seconded for special service in London. The Major was a young man of means, engaged to a young lady, Miss Derry, daughter of a prominent London business man; he was trying to increase his income, which suffered from his gambling propensities, and by means of an agent, Mr. Sydney Armstrong, the newly formed syndicate of three became involved in a building speculation in a western suburb of London, which ended in a scandal, since the three speculators had considerably overstepped the limit of legitimate operations and had caused heavy losses, especially to a number of persons of small income.

Major Johnson was immediately dismissed from the Army; Weston and Throgmorton had to submit to an inquiry, which, however, led to no result, as their transactions were not indictable in law. Mr. Armstrong's name was never mentioned in public. The deponent knew that this occurrence resulted in Miss Derry's parents informing Major Johnson that they must insist on the breaking-off of his engagement to their daughter; but the deponent is at the same time aware that the young lady, in spite of this, retained a warm inclination for the Major, which is all the more inexplicable to the deponent, as she herself has always felt repulsion for this man. Weston and Throgmorton were not long in squandering the money made by the building scheme, while Johnson, on the other hand, had luck at racing, and as the deponent's aunt died just then, and Weston came to the deponent, begging her pardon and promising better behavior for the future, besides showing her much kindness at the time, she consented to live with him in the house where the court was sitting.

This, however, she soon regretted. Major Johnson now became a constant visitor to the house. Quite apart from the feeling of dislike he inspired in her, she was all the more disinclined to tolerate his presence on account of the impression she had that he was trying, in a very unbecoming way and with highly reprehensible designs, to force his society upon her.

In reply to the magistrate the deponent testifies that she has never entertained other feelings for Major Johnson than those here described, and that, although he has long pursued her with an attachment altogether incomprehensible to her, she has always repulsed him with loathing.

This declaration of the deponent gave rise to a short adjournment of the examination, which, nevertheless, on account of the importance of the matter, was soon resumed.

The deponent then stated that Weston became addicted to drink and dissipation, that Throgmorton, her brother, likewise led an irregular life, and that the Major, who in contrast to the other two, was in every way respectable in his conduct, became her constant visitor. She told him frankly her impression that the two men had no object but to defraud him of his money, and said she felt no interest in him and earnestly begged him to withdraw and leave her in peace. The Major appeared not to believe in her words, but, nevertheless, repeated them to Weston; and it was this that caused the scene which, with regard to its importance in the case, is given in the deponent's own words, as taken down in shorthand by the examining magistrate:

"I can still remember that terrible evening—it was the 28th of April, a cold, wet evening. It was eight o'clock; I had turned on the light and sat in this room, where we are now, at that table by the fireplace where you are sitting. Major Johnson sat opposite to me, talking—I distinctly remember that he had the cat on his lap—the cat you call 'Amy's Puss.' He took out of his pocket a silver chain, which he told me had belonged to his fiancée, Miss Derry—whose name is Amy, like mine. He was going to put this chain round Puss's neck—to show me, as he said, that his only thought was of me. Our only servant had left us; we expected a new servant to come in next day; we were alone.

"Then the door was flung open and Weston came in; he was intoxicated and spoke loudly; my brother stood behind him and tried to hold him back. I shall not attempt to repeat the words that were spoken. The blood froze to ice in my veins, so terribly did that man speak, so utterly low were his words that I only partly understood them. I still remember the last: 'Take her, James, take the hussy; and if she's prudish, just lick her into shape. I sell you the woman for that thousand pounds, you know. That's her price, she's worth it, and you're gone on her; for all I care she can go to ——.'

"I sprang up.

"Major Johnson had also risen.

"I tried to run from the room, but Weston put himself in my way; I can still fancy I feel his brandy-laden breath in my face, see his staring, blood-shot eyes, hear his coarse, rough voice—and then it was that it happened. He tried to seize me, and I *believe*—I say, I believe I snatched up a steel paper-knife that lay on the table and thrust it into his breast—I heard his cry—I fell to the ground and remember no more.

"When I came to myself I was lying on the drawing-room sofa. Major Johnson stood bending over me. I screamed and clutched with my hands. The Major was pale but very calm.

"'Mrs. Weston,' said he, 'you may depend upon me, no harm shall come to you. Remember that you may trust me. It was I who killed him—*I* did it, you understand.'

"I did not understand him—it was not till later that I learned what had happened—learned it while my whole being was shaken by terror and emotion; and I submitted to what those two wanted to do. I made myself my brother's accomplice—plunged myself into the misfortunes from which you alone—you, the only man I love —can deliver me."

Here the magistrate broke off the examination, which, in consideration of deponent's excited condition, could not be continued. It was now eleven o'clock in the evening.

The magistrate remarks here, that at this juncture he made every conceivable effort to calm the deponent, and that after the adjournment of the examination he continued his efforts, but that he by no means lost sight of the responsibility resting on him as examining magistrate.

In view of the peculiar situation he wishes to lay special stress on this; also on the fact that, in view of possible indisposition on the part of the deponent, he induced Madam Sivertsen to remove from her cabin and pass the night in a room immediately adjoining that of the deponent on the first floor.

The magistrate further remarks that in the preceding transcript of the examination he has included everything that seems to him to belong to the document, and that he has only omitted what appears to him of no importance. In conformity with the usual custom, the magistrate has not included in the document the proceedings which were preliminary to the *confession* contained in the above. It is therefore expressly remarked that the examination was opened by a conversation between the magistrate and the deponent, in the course of which the magistrate explicitly informed the deponent of the discovery of the body which had taken place in the house, and of the facts in connection with it which had called attention to her and given rise to the charge, which she then admitted to be justified—in any case, partly so.

The magistrate adds that it would have been desirable to have a shorthand report of the whole sitting of the court, but he is obliged by circumstances to employ an incomplete version of the proceedings, which rests upon the reliance placed in the magistrate who conducted the examination.

Examination adjourned—accused remanded—Court rose.

CHAPTER IX

Continuation of the preceding examination:

On the 13th of July the Court again met at the same place, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, constituted as before. Amy Weston again appeared, free from restraint or compulsion, and deposed as follows:

"I passed the night after this event under the influence of a sleeping-draught. On the following day, contrary to all expectation, I found myself so well that I was able to take part in a consultation between my brother and Major Johnson about what had happened. It now appeared that my brother was not only Weston's equal in infamy, but even surpassed him. Major Johnson insisted that it was he who had killed Weston, and declared himself willing to take the responsibility; my brother tried to make it clear to him that this step would only ruin him and would do no good to us others. Weston was a ruined man, he himself was on the verge of bankruptcy, and those two had gone so far as to make use of my fortune. I was weak and ill; my brother took advantage of my weakness and of Major Johnson's incomprehensible lack of character. If the Major had really attacked Weston at the same time as I did and given him a wound, he as a man should have been able to defend his action; while I shuddered at the thought of police and prison. I am only a woman, I let my brother do all he proposed to do. My brother then behaved like a scoundrel. He formed a plan by which Weston's infamy was continued after his death. He disposed of the corpse—how, I did not know until yesterday; he got Major Johnson completely under his influence, partly by hinting that I should be induced by his chivalrous behavior to overcome my aversion for him, partly by playing upon the Major's horror of being publicly involved in a scandalous case. My brother went so far as to obtain the Major's agreement to the latter's disappearance and to the spreading of a report that he had gone to Burma. All this he did—as appeared afterwards—in order to obtain a power of attorney to use his name and so to keep him as the gold-mine he had been while Weston was alive. Whether the Major had any positive complicity in the steps my brother took to conceal Weston's body I do not know, but I know that from that day began that hateful existence which only ended on the day my brother was drowned, and the day you became mine——"

In reply to the magistrate the deponent stated that she was sure that *she* and not the Major had struck the fatal blow at Weston; that she must have heard that the cat had disappeared the night after that event, but that she had not given the circumstance a thought until the day she again visited the house and found the cat. She compared this with what she had chanced to hear of her brother's actions after the event and what had passed at Mr. Armstrong's. She could now understand that the magistrate had followed up a clue and that the deed had been discovered; nevertheless, she adds that, if she has now made a full and free confession, this is entirely due to her love for the magistrate, in whose hands she places her destiny in this and all else.

Questioned as to Miss Derry, the deponent states that she does not know this lady, but only knows that she entertains a strong inclination for Major Johnson. The deponent supposes this is due to a common interest in racing. She knows that Miss Derry has searched for the Major, and that it was partly for this reason that her brother insisted on Major Johnson's going under the name of the dead man, Weston. As to the Major, deponent asserts that, in spite of his importunate behavior towards her, his feeble capacity and his irregularity in money matters, he does not appear to her to be a bad man, and that on one occasion he has really shown her a certain chivalrousness, which was only spoiled by his subsequent weakness and submission to her brother. As to her brother, she declares that he was in every respect a corrupt and abandoned person, and that she only obeyed him through fear of being involved in a public scandal, which would not only have brought about the discovery of the manslaughter but also of extensive frauds committed by him upon the Major and perhaps upon others, which were now partly covered by the Major's money.

After the deponent had declared herself willing to acquiesce in everything the magistrate might find proper, the examination was closed at one o'clock.

The Court then rose.

Transcript certified correct.

HOLGER NIELSEN.

CHAPTER X

"WILL you take a seat, Major," said Dr. Koldby, "and you, Miss Derry, pray be seated."

Dr. Koldby had given them both a very urgent invitation to appear in his room at the Lökken Hotel, and they had duly presented themselves.

"Let me begin by saying, Major, that I have to-day received a letter from my friend, Holger Nielsen, from London. This letter is dated from No. 48 Cranbourne Grove, a house of which, as Miss Derry is aware, Mr. Nielsen and I are the tenants. The cat discovered in this house, about which you, Miss Derry, already know, is Mrs. Weston's; the corpse discovered in the cellar of the same house, about which you, Major Johnson, have full information, is that of Mr. Weston. I assume, Miss Derry, that you will now abandon your attempts to aid your former fiancé, and that you will both lay down your arms. I now know all, and I am not going to waste time by finding out how much each of you knows or does not know. For you, Major Johnson, the wisest course is undoubtedly to acknowledge that you are Major Johnson and to put Mrs. Weston out of your head. Your wisest course, Miss Derry, is to appeal to Major Johnson, and not to 'Mr. Weston.' I consider it my duty to give you an abstract of the information I have received from London, and I beg you to lend me your attention."

Hereupon Dr. Koldby read out an extremely careful selection of the documents Nielsen had sent him.

Miss Derry turned pale and finally burst into tears.

The Major turned yellow and for a brief moment looked dangerous.

Koldby finished his reading and looked up inquiringly.

"Now, Major, are you prepared to be escorted home to London by the police?"

The Major blazed up, with all his assurance of the other day; but Koldby took no notice of him, and continued calmly:

"You are not, then; that's first rate, because it's a thing that I want to avoid. Are you inclined, then, to let Miss Derry escort you home? It seems to me she has deserved some consideration on your part——"

Miss Derry blushed, and at this moment the Major threw a stolen glance at the handsome young woman.

Koldby continued imperturbably:

"I shall now ask you, Major Johnson, to be kind enough to confirm the truth of what Mrs. Weston has testified, and to sign this declaration, which I have drawn up in your own language. I will read it to you:

"'I, the undersigned, James Johnson, hereby declare that I was an eye-witness of the following: that on the evening of the 28th of April last, the deceased Mr. Weston, in his house, No. 48 Cranbourne Grove, London, being in a state of intoxication, overwhelmed his wife with abuses and laid violent hands upon her, and that his said wife, Amy Weston, formerly Throgmorton, in self-defence wounded Mr. Weston with a knife, which wound caused his death. And I declare myself willing, whenever it may be required of me, to give evidence of the same on oath before a Danish or English court.'"

The Major flushed. "That means scandal and imprisonment."

Dr. Koldby shrugged his shoulders. "That can't be helped. You have committed an unpardonable fault, and you must pay the penalty; however, there is nothing to prevent your making this declaration before the local magistrate here. I don't suppose it would lead to any arrest, as you are not accused of any crime, and when you have made your declaration—you can do it to-morrow before the probate court—you will be perfectly free to leave here."

The Major hesitated.

"No," he said. "You can have me arrested if you like—you won't get me alive."

Miss Derry looked at him through her tears.

"Very well," said Dr. Koldby. "So you think this step would bring death to you and sorrow to this young lady. At the same time you think that it will not bring Mr. Weston to life again, nor cause just punishment, as people call it, to fall upon the two guilty parties, Mr. Weston and the drowned Throgmorton. As far as that goes, you and I are agreed. But you forget that in the cellar at Cranbourne Grove lies a corpse, made partly unrecognizable, which may be discovered at any moment. In that case the question will be raised in spite of all we may do, or leave undone. Now that Mr. Throgmorton's affairs are to be wound up, there is every prospect of the house coming into the hands of the trustees. There is also a possibility that it may be kept outside the estate—but do you think that Mrs. Weston and Mr. Nielsen, who are now acting in common, will destroy the body? If so, let me tell you that they won't. It will, therefore, only be a question of time when the matter will come up."

"Precisely," said the Major. "Only postpone it for a little while, and I shall be gone. And then let them see if they can find me."

"That is excellent," interrupted the Doctor, "for you; but Mrs. Weston has a claim on your evidence. She does not want to be convicted, and she is guiltless of the only crime that has been committed—namely, that of concealing the body."

"So am I," said the Major. "Throgmorton did that by himself."

"Throgmorton is dead," interposed the Doctor shortly. "In any case you have been living here for a couple of months under the murdered man's name."

"And for that I am willing to go into exile," said the Major.

"And I'll go with him," added Miss Derry pluckily, blushing as she said it.

Dr. Koldby smiled. "This is all very nice, Miss Derry; I admire you, and I should be glad to help the Major, even if you have both been caught in an attempt to throw dust in my eyes, only I don't see how I can justify myself to Mrs. Weston and Nielsen."

"Doctor," said Miss Derry shamefacedly, "the Major will sign the first part of your declaration, and then we'll go away. Then if Mrs. Weston wants to appeal to justice, don't you think it's reasonable to suppose that justice will turn out to be just?"

"It may be reasonable," said the Doctor, "but it's not at all likely."

"Then I should let the body stay in the cellar and not bother about justice," said Miss Derry.

"So would I," said the Doctor, "without a doubt. But you see, Nielsen won't. He's a lawyer and a criminalist and all that."

"But he loves her." Miss Derry blushed again.

"Love is an uncommonly fine thing," said the Doctor; "but one's duty to Society has to come first."

"I should have burnt that body—why didn't Throgmorton burn it?" she asked, rather doubtfully.

"I can assure you, Miss Derry, that I wish nothing better than that he had done so, though in that case I don't believe you would have found this man here. If only Society were arranged at all rationally, the whole thing would be simple as A B C. But all this confounded institution of justice makes us obliged to act in defiance of it, simply to achieve our legitimate objects. I won't act Providence. Do as you please. Give me that declaration, which, of course, is of no use whatever, because it hasn't got the legal rigmarole, and then clear out, go as far as you like."

To this they soon agreed, and the Major signed the declaration.

As they were about to leave the room the Doctor checked them. "One moment," said he, as he pulled out of a drawer the watch he had found on the drowned man. The Major and Miss Derry turned round.

"You see this?" said the Doctor; "this was really the key to the riddle—the watch we found on Throgmorton's body. I must tell you that Nielsen and I have been guilty of one or two little irregularities; trifles such as robbery of corpses and so on. But now you had better take the watch and let the probate court keep the twelve hundred crowns; and if this is all you have on your conscience, it is a fairly healthy one."

Thus it was settled, and on the following day "Mr. Weston" and Miss Derry left Lökken together under the nose of the probate court and of the scandalized colony of visitors.

CHAPTER XI

Lökken, July 19, 19—.

Dear Friend:

I have received the documents in the case. You have yourself chosen the part of magistrate, that is your business; you have appointed me judge, made me the superior authority who has to decide whether the case is to be gone on with or not. My dear sir, you go too far. The gods be praised! I am no lawyer; that is the last thing I could have been. I protest against the duty you put upon me. I *will not* undertake it.

I admire your examination; I have not much difficulty in filling in the pauses, and if I were young enough, I should envy you; youth and love are the only things I envy. You see, I am sitting here, on this barren shore, like an old gray crow, with my hoarse and ominous cry. So now you know everything; you have settled who the murdered man is, and you have settled who is the murderer. Didn't I tell you it was woman's work? The two lovers—in spite of the precaution of Madam Sivertsen's change of quarters, a sacrifice to the spirit of British respectability, which I acknowledge but do not admire—are evidently on the point of making a match of it. I can supplement this by telling you that after an interview in my room, Major Johnson seems to be going to take pity on the faithful Amy No. 1, whom I always—you must excuse me this—have admired as much as it is possible for me to admire anyone of the female sex.

Thus the whole story appears to be finished; all the actors are disposed of as they ought to be in every story that ends properly.

And yet the most important of all is not disposed of.

The "man in the basement"—the corpse in the cellar!

A wise man of old time, whose name I forget, said that it is the dead who rule us mortals. They encumber our earth; they continue to live in their actions; they lay their bony hands upon us; they command, and we must obey. That is true; the dead made our laws, the dead claim our obedience, they determine our course—they rule.

The dead man in the cellar is not disposed of. What now? You ask yourself what is to be done, you are good enough to leave the decision to me. I decline to decide upon the case, I return a question to you.

What is to be done now?

Major Johnson and his Amy begged me so imploringly to preserve them from the dead man. I protested on behalf of your Amy, but I had to admit that it was absurd to ruin the lives of two human beings out of consideration for so-called justice, which is in the power of the unlamented dead. He was a scoundrel, he got his deserts, he cannot come to life again, as a dead man he has no claim to judicial vindication. But Society, all right-minded people will say, Society has that claim. I have exempted the Major and Amy from rendering an account to Society. They have gone; I did not ask for their address; I don't know where they went. Forgive me this. A scrap of paper, on which he wrote down what he had seen, is all I have; and, though I am no lawyer, I don't believe it is of any real value. For it would be such a reasonable thing to attribute weight to this piece of evidence, that I am sure no court of justice would do so. The courts, as we know, only attribute weight to things that ordinary people regard as perfectly indifferent.

But if the dead man has to let the Major go, he will hang on to you or your Amy. And with good right, Society will say. She murdered him—killed him, let us say—and she must stand face to face with Society and answer for her deed. When a human tribunal has acquitted her, she will be free, not before. The justice we inherit from the dead demands that of her.

You know that; you are a lawyer, and you understand that the corpse which lies in the cellar at Cranbourne Grove has rights that you and she must respect. As a man, you know that everything is in order; as I said, everyone is disposed of. Weston fell as a result of his actions; no one has any interest in hearing anything about him; Throgmorton is dead, his guilt is wiped out, since the world cannot or dare not pursue the dead, who rule over it. No one has anything to gain by this case being followed up, and yet the dead man claims his rights; Society and the living demand that justice shall take its course, the justice that can kill the happiness of two innocent living persons.

The corpse in the cellar must be disposed of. Miss Derry, in her womanly ignorance, talked about destroying it; being a woman, all she said was that it would have been splendid if Throgmorton had destroyed it. And, of course, every other woman in the world, whether in trousers or not, would say the same thing; but as the case stands, they would all with one voice demand that the law should take its course.

The law means a trial for murder for your Amy, a trial that would bring her suffering and place her destiny in the hands of an entirely indifferent and fortuitous handful of men.

My dear sir, lawyer, vindicator of justice, whatever you like to call yourself—I said the story was done; it is only just beginning. You wished to avoid the inconveniences of a public prosecution of the case; I kept you up to it, and you avoided them; it was difficult, but it was done. Now you stand exactly where you did when you began. You can no longer avoid it; you really can't.

What you think I don't know; you are young and inconsistent; besides, you used some oily words about challenging the verdict of Society, which always made me sick; as you know, nothing is more indifferent to me personally than the verdict of Society.

But you?

To my mind, this case contains the one lesson, that we human beings have surrounded ourselves for our protection with something we call justice; something we ourselves have provided, as we have provided soldiers and cannon; something that has no intrinsic justification, does not rest upon itself, as we may say, but only exists for our protection, and which may become our enemy when we cannot control it ourselves, each one of us personally for himself. It is a watchdog which may turn its teeth against the flock it was intended to guard. Therefore do not speak of justice, but of a useful human institution, which is only defensible so long as it acts according to its objects. The rights of the dead Weston are nothing in themselves; the most one can say is, that Society, for its own protection, may demand to have the circumstances clearly set forth; but I leave it to you to decide whether this general observation has its justification in your special case. And even when you have settled this, Weston's corpse will still be lying in the cellar beneath the house which should shelter your new-found happiness.

It cannot be left to lie there!

I protest against and refuse the task you have appointed me; I will not decide what you are to do in this case. I will only address this question to you: Have you the courage to complete Throgmorton's work, have you the courage to spare your Amy by obliterating Weston's body from the realm of facts, whether by burning or by burial?

Have you courage for that—or do you condemn, with the remainder of living, upright Society, the deed which it would call a crime? Consider and admit that only now is the case really beginning for you. *Hic Rhodus—hic salta!* Your friend,

JENS KOLDBY.

P. S.—I'm a lover of clearness and thoroughness, so let me add here what the heat of argument made me forget before. Your statement of the case contains nothing about Amy's cat. You ought to have cleared up this not unimportant point. The cat as well as its collar was Amy Derry's. She had received it as a present from the Major, and sent it back to him to remind him of his allegiance. It seems to me that of everyone concerned, the cat comes best out of it, it has really accomplished something worth talking about. I therefore wish to establish the fact that Miss Derry has given it to *me*. So now it is *my* cat, as you will please remember. She says it belongs to a very choice breed. So does the lady —her name is now Mrs. Johnson. J. K.

CHAPTER XII

"Amy," said Nielsen, as he laid the Doctor's letter on the table in the drawing-room at Cranbourne Grove, where they were sitting after lunch, "here is a letter from Denmark from Dr. Koldby. I won't read it to you, as you don't know my friend and would not be able to judge of his words. But he is right. There is a dead man in the cellar of this house—a dead man who has not been disposed of. He has waited quietly and patiently for three months—waited as the dead can wait. Now he demands that we should act—demands it with all the authority of the dead."

Amy looked up; there was sorrow in her eyes—sorrow and silent horror. But she said nothing.

Nielsen continued: "When my friend and I found this dead man we formed an unusual resolution. We acted according to a theory—my theory, and every step we took led us on the right way. But at the same time the dull, gray theory gave way to bright, green life. Now it is life alone that decides our actions, theory is silent. Not for a moment have I forgotten that the dead man represents a right, not the right of the dead, but of the living—of Society. I understand and acknowledge that Society has a right to demand that no deed by which a living person becomes a dead one shall be arbitrarily concealed before being presented to the public judgment. Don't you see, Amy? don't you feel as I do, that we cannot deny Society its right, we cannot, as the Doctor writes, destroy all traces of what has taken place in this house?"

Amy made no reply.

Nielsen went on: "It is an instinct which is born in us, and grows with us. Let it be granted that we both see that *you* acted justifiably when you struck him down. Or, if we have doubts of that, let us grant that what you did in that moment was not a crime. I believe that if you stood face to face with the men who by the laws of the land are our judges, and told them all you have told me, and awaited their judgment, they would say: 'Go thy way, woman, we condemn thee not.' But both you and I feel that we must challenge that judgment, do we not?"

"No," said Amy. "No—I have told you all; you understand me, but you cannot ask that I, the innocent, the defenceless one, shall expose myself to the gaping crowd, submit to the chance verdict of indifferent strangers? I feel that I am guiltless. What weight, then, should there be in the verdict of others? You understand me —and you say you love me."

Nielsen knelt at her feet and took her hand.

"My Amy," he said, "you are right, you are guiltless. But now rise and go down there—where the corpse lies below our feet—destroy it, burn it. You understand, wipe it out of existence. Do that, Amy, with your own hands."

She shuddered and bowed her head upon his shoulder; he felt her tears upon his cheek, while she whispered:

"I cannot, Holger—I cannot."

He kissed her eyes.

"Amy," he said mournfully, "you cannot do it, and therefore it must not be done. I could do anything in the world for you; even the hardest thing would be easy if I did it for you. But this I cannot do. I could explain it away, I could find plenty of charges against that Society which will bring trouble to you and me by its demands.

But as to the deed itself, I should hesitate, as you; I should say, as you, that I cannot do it. For me the inner voice is the supreme director of my actions. I feel what is right, I feel what is wrong, and before this feeling thoughts and words are silent. You and I are one. What I do for you, I do for myself; if I could save you from conviction by doing this, I could not do it; I could not act as you—and I feel that we cannot."

"And if my life was at stake?" she whispered.

Nielsen looked up.

"There is no question of your life, you know that. There is only a question of consideration for all the others, a consideration to which we can rise superior—as we shall. We cannot lay down rules for what a person shall do under all circumstances. Whoever tries to do so breaks down. The founders of religions have tried this, and from that has resulted the fallacy of every doctrine, the fight between truth and falsehood. We men must look at each separate case by itself, as we must look at this. This is not so profound, not so comprehensive, but it is true human nature. The question for us at this moment is not: Has a person the right, to save the one he loves, to cheat Society of what he owes it? We cannot put the question in that way, we must put it far less comprehensively. The question is, Have I the right to destroy Weston's body in order to save you a trial? Only by seeing each little thing as the little thing it is can we men have a clear idea of what we ought to do. Let priests and poets talk about universal rules—doctors, lawyers, and ordinary people *must* take each single case by itself, as we must take this."

"Let us go abroad," said Amy: and Nielsen felt how she was trembling as she again pressed her cheek against his.

He shook his head. "We cannot do that. There is only this to be done—to speak out and await the verdict of Society, or to keep silence and burn the body. You know what you feel we ought to do—you feel as I do. We shall never be free of this if we fail now. No one with impunity can disobey the voice within. When an action is accomplished it can generally be defended; perhaps this action, too, could be defended afterwards, when what was done could not be undone; but now, the dead man lies in the cellar beneath our feet; he is waiting, and you and I must act. We have no need of defence. What we need is to feel assured that we are acting rightly. And you and I know how we are to act to be acting rightly. Believe me, Amy, the proof of the justice of Society's claim is only to be found when the individual asks himself and receives the same answer from within as from the thousand voices of his fellows."

"And the shame?" she whispered. "The shame of standing face to face with all these people! Oh, Holger, Holger, you must be able to feel how awful it is!"

"Amy," said Nielsen, putting his arm round her waist, "I once spoke to a club of young Social Democrats about crime and punishment. One of them put the question to me, whether I meant that all administration of justice ought to be public, and I answered that I did mean it. Still, I explained, I could imagine that a young woman who had been injured by a man might have a claim that the public should not learn anything about it—because of the shame, as you say, which may fall upon the innocent as well as the guilty. And the young workingman answered: 'Ought we not to educate Society only to feel shame when an action has been committed which in itself deserves shame?' And I said nothing, for the young man was right."

"But poor people live so much with one another that they can conceal nothing," said Amy. "You understand that I, who have lived so much out of the world, feel that the shame may fall upon me, even when I am the injured one. I beg you, Holger, do this for me, for our love's sake."

Nielsen had risen—she rose, too, and threw her arms about his neck.

"Save me, Holger, save me for the last time from that terrible man and the evil he will do me."

Nielsen freed himself; he took her hands in his and kissed them one after the other. Then he bent down and kissed her forehead, her eyes, her mouth.

"Amy," he said, "I am by your side; if I refuse to listen to the voice within me I shall not only be false to myself, I shall be false to *you*. Come, this very day we will go to the authorities, and you will see—as soon as we have spoken our burden will be gone. We shall not do this because Society rules us with its laws, but because we feel ourselves in agreement with the spirit that sustains co-operation between man and man, each for himself and for all the rest."

There was a ring at the front door. Madam Sivertsen came into the room.

"Mr. Nielsen," she said, "here is a telegram."

Nielsen took it and read it; it was from Dr. Koldby.

Amy had her eyes fixed upon him; her cheeks burned; then she said hoarsely:

"Before you do this, Holger—speak to him—let me speak to him."

Nielsen smiled. "Do you know what he says? Only this: 'Meet me to-morrow evening at half-past seven, Southwestern Hotel, Southampton.'"

Amy took his hand. "Do that, Holger—do that, before you do the other——"

Nielsen made no reply; but the next morning he had his bag packed and asked Amy to accompany him to Southampton.

CHAPTER XIII

Madam Sivertsen started as she opened the door and saw Dr. Koldby.

"Bless me! you here, Doctor? Why, Mr. Nielsen has gone off to-day to Southampton to meet you. The lady has gone, too. You know the lady, don't you?"

"I know the lady," said the Doctor, who was rather short-spoken and seemed to Madam Sivertsen very excited. "I had my reasons for asking Nielsen and the lady to go to Southampton. Now I am going to ask you, Madam Sivertsen, to go down there at once, this very evening, and give Nielsen this letter—give it to him personally, you understand. There's a train at six from Waterloo. You can catch it if you get ready at once. You will be doing me a great service, you understand—a great service by doing this."

Madam Sivertsen was taken aback, but, as before remarked, she was accustomed to do as she was told, and at six o'clock the express steamed away with her in it.

The Doctor was left alone at Cranbourne

Grove. He sat in the drawing-room with the cat on his lap and held a little oration.

"Amy's Puss," said he, "you are a poor cat that nobody cares for. You have a good deal on your conscience, but if it came to light the whole world in its devout simplicity and in agreement with its traditions would exclaim that you were sent straight from headquarters with a silver collar on your neck in order that what has been sinned in secret might be proclaimed from the housetops. I won't take your glory from you, Puss. I am a poor man, who do my best to act in a human way; I disregard generalties and keep to the single point. The responsibility, little Puss, I take upon myself. I have always done so, and I intend to go on doing so. But you and I, Puss, we must keep together, you know."

Puss arched her back and purred. But Dr. Koldby remained sitting a long while in deep thought. At last he got up with a start.

CHAPTER XIV

MADAM SIVERTSEN found Nielsen and Mrs. Weston at the hotel at Southampton. They were expecting the Doctor and were surprised to see her.

Nielsen opened the letter and started. It contained these words:

DEAR NIELSEN:

Come back to London to-morrow morning—you cannot come sooner. Take Madam Sivertsen with you and her you have chosen—as the saying is. Take my best wishes with you on your way towards life's sunshine. I liked you, I liked you very much; now you are out of my life. Only one piece of advice. Drop that confounded justice, give up the law. It's only fools who think they can reduce justice to a system; who believe in a rational justice, when there is nothing but a miserable system of expediency to be used in the wretched service of humanity. Seek the truth and happiness in life. Seek them with *her.* Quit "justice" of the inferior earthly manufacture, the only one we men can find.

Be happy, Nielsen. Stay here, it is a nice, comfortable house with many memories. There is lots of room below there. You can take your bride down and show her round, *there is nothing to frighten her; what there was is gone, and that is my doing.* Miss Derry gave me the idea. Now it is done, and no man on earth can make it undone. The Major and Miss Derry have gone away to seek happiness. Help them in that. That is a thing we men need not be ashamed of doing. I myself am going away; I will not meet you yet—perhaps some time a long while hence. Only let me tell you, I will not go away alone; I am taking with me the only one who could betray me—Amy's cat.

Farewell,
Your friend,
JENS KOLDBY.

CHAPTER XV

In the far west of Cornwall, among granite rocks and wild moorland, lies Sennen Cove, a little fishing village, near the Land's End. West of the cove the cliffs of Pedn-men-du—Black Stone head—thrust themselves out among the waves of the Atlantic, which dash against the boulders at their foot. Here there arrived, one afternoon in July, a foreign painter, a Dane, who took up his abode in a little cottage near the cliff.

His luggage came in a cart from Penzance. Besides his portmanteau, easel, and color-box, it consisted of an immense packing-case, which contained (so he said) a piece of sculpture, for he practiced that art as well as painting. It was the statue of a young woman, a work he loved, the masterpiece of his life.

The painter was accompanied by a well-conditioned tabby cat, which went by the name of "Amy's Puss." The natives of the place were used to the visits of "painter fellows," and took little notice of them; they saw no reason for distinguishing the new arrival from other "foreigners" from outside Cornwall: all were heathen folk and equally mad. The packing-case had a room to itself at the cottage and was never unpacked.

One day when a northwesterly gale was raging against the cliffs the painter secured the services of a fisherman and a wheelbarrow, and with their help got the packing-case to the edge of the cliff, from which he hurled it with his own hands into the seething depths beneath. It dashed the spray high into the air and sank to the deep rocky bottom.

This adventure only confirmed the fisher-folk in their opinion that the painter fellow was mad —madder, indeed, than the rest of his kind—but the event was soon forgotten in the round of their daily work, and the sunken statue was left among what wreckage and relics of smuggling days might lie in the deep water below the cliff.

Meanwhile Dr. Koldby left the village and wandered far to foreign shores—and Amy's cat went with him.

CHAPTER XVI

It was Mr. Sydney Armstrong who sold the house, No. 48 Cranbourne Grove; a young painter bought it, as it suited him exactly and it was not dear. Mrs. Neilsen sold it, and went abroad with her husband, the young Danish lawyer, Holger Nielsen, whom no one knew or asked about.

They, too, crossed the sea, to visit the New World, where she saw once more her childhood's home in the West Indies. There they found summer and sunshine, and were happy in their love.

Amy did not quite understand how it had happened—she did not wish to ask questions—but one summer night under the deep blue sky of the tropics she spoke.

" Holger,' she said, " why were you so much in earnest about—about what you said that day, when I cried and entreated you—and now you do not think any more about it? "

Nielsen put his arm around her waist and said with a smile:

"You surely didn't expect me to go to the police and say: There was a dead man in the cellar of my house, he is there no longer, my friend Dr. Koldby has unlawfully removed him?"

Amy moved a step away.

"For your friend's sake you would forbear, but my prayers were not enough to hold you back before—when you talked about the rights of Society."

"Silly little girl," said Neilsen. "Have you forgotten the inner voice, the voice of which I inquired? It is silent now, is it not? And do you know why? Because we men and women cannot expect an answer to every question we ask. The voice within us speaks only of *one single thing*—a thing which *is*. When Jens Koldby acted in a way that he must himself justify to his own inner voice, he took this question away from us. You feel that, don't you? I find only one lesson attached to the dead man of Cranbourne Grove, namely, that we who occupy ourselves with what is called law and justice must give up all hope of finding a golden rule. There is no such thing, but only a series of separate cases which must be judged one by one; for each human being the object must be to act rightly, as he feels himself to be acting rightly, and this series of righteous actions makes up the sum of justice."

Amy did not altogether understand him.

But he took her in his arms and said with a smile: "One lesson, I said—yes, that is all; but as a memorial of his death I won you, and you I shall keep, by the right of love."

So those two went forward to find happiness together.

THE END

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